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5 Cents.

PLUCK AND LUCK

THE INVISIBLE TWELVE

AN IRISH ROMANCE OF THE PRESENT DAY

AND OTHER STORIES

By Allan Arnold



"His hand is as cold as death. He is dead!"
Mort Morley sprang forward, and bent over
his brother for a few minutes, feeling his
hands and breast, as he exclaimed: "My
dear brother is dead!"

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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The Invisible Twelve

AN IRISH ROMANCE OF THE PRESENT DAY

By ALLAN ARNOLD

CHAPTER I.

WHO WERE THE INVISIBLE TWELVE?

"Remember, Justin O'Neill, if you join our band you must take an oath—a solemn oath—to obey our leaders in all things."

Thus spoke Theodore Falvey, a young student of Trinity College, in Dublin, and he was addressing a fellow-student.

They were both young men, under twenty, and they were great chums, although they were very different in their dispositions.

Theodore Falvey was a light-hearted, rollicking youth from the south of Ireland, who cordially hated everything English, and who was willing and ready to join any and every movement set on foot for the redemption of his native land.

Justin O'Neill, who hailed from the older north, was just as patriotic at heart, but he was a little more cautious than his impulsive friend, and he hesitated to join any secret movement of the Irish patriots without knowing some of their workings, at least.

The two friends were strolling in the Phoenix Park on the evening in question, and Theodore had just made the remark above quoted.

"But you can't expect one to go it blindfolded," replied Justin O'Neill. "Surely you can tell me who is to be our leader?"

"That I can't, as there is no special leader in the organization. We are ruled and governed by a council composed of twelve men who are never seen."

"Then the twelve men are the judge, jury, counsel and witnesses, I suppose?"

"They have all to say in directing us, and they are never visible. It should be enough for you to know that they are working heart and soul for the redemption of our native land and for the punishment of all spies, traitors and informers."

"It is not enough for me to know, Theodore," replied Justin O'Neill. "What other object have you in view?"

"To harass the English enemy, of course, in every way. As the hated government will not allow us to bear arms openly, it is the duty of every true Irishman to fight the enemy with any weapons we can command."

"Do you mean dynamite?"

"I mean anything and everything that will aid us in driving the English from the soil. 'Tis little mercy they have had on us ever since they came here. Man alive, isn't my own brother lying over in Portland Prison now, and his only crime was loving his native land?"

"My father died in prison for the same cause, and 'tis little reason I have to love the English," said Justin O'Neill, in bitter tones; "but it strikes me that a secret organization will never effect a great deal. Why, you will have spies and informers after you by the dozen."

"Let them come, if they dare, and we will teach the brigands a lesson. Remember one thing, however."

"What is that?"

"We admit no one into our ranks unless we are pretty certain of his patriotism, and besides, some near relative of his must have suffered death or imprisonment at the hands of the British government."

"That is the reason you invite me, then?"

"One of the reasons. We know that you love Ireland and hate the English. Besides, isn't it true that you have an enemy who has been the cause of all your poor father's trouble?"

"That is true," said Justin O'Neill, as he clenched his hands, while his dark eyes flashed with hatred. "I have sworn to have revenge on the villain."

"Then join us, and you will have revenge, old fellow. It may not be a very Christian-like doctrine, but our tyrants have taught us to believe in the 'Wild Justice of Revenge,' and they must reap the harvest they have sown."

"We have suffered enough to drive us mad, it is true, Theo. My father was as peaceable and as good a man as ever lived, yet they actually murdered him. Oh, how my blood boils when I think of him! Were it not for my good uncle in America I would be in the poorhouse to-day, and my dear sister as well."

"Heaven prosper the people of America, I say, with all my heart and soul," exclaimed the impulsive young Southerner, "for they have taught us true manhood besides. The English rave at America, but we have good reason to bless the great western republic. If you do not join our band for love of Ireland, Justin, join us for vengeance."

"Enough, Theo," exclaimed Justin O'Neill, in subdued but passionate tones. "I will join your band, come what will. I love Ireland with all my heart, but I hate her enemies more, and my father's enemy is one of my country's greatest tyrants. I am with you for the wild justice of revenge, as O'Connell put it. When can I be made one of you?"

"This very night you will appear before the Invisible Twelve, as I have already proposed you, and you will be sworn in, if you pass through the ordeals."

"Are they severe ones?"

"Severe enough, especially for traitors and spies, but not for true men. I cannot tell you any more now."

The two young men had stopped for the last few minutes before a thick hedge, but they soon moved on again, conversing on the important topic in low tones.

After strolling around the park for some time, the two young men returned to their apartments.

Having partaken of supper, Justin and Theodore retired to their bedroom in order to smoke a cigar before preparing to meet the Invisible Twelve at ten o'clock.

Soon after entering the room Justin O'Neill raised his hand in alarm, saying:

"Hist! Was not that a groan I heard in the other room?" And the young men listened intently.

Several deep groans soon fell on their ears, and then a voice was heard, crying:

"Blame such laws, I say! Oh, would that could destroy all the English tyrants on the face of the earth!"

"'Tis the strange, silent lodger," said Theodore Falvey, "and he is denouncing the English in bitter terms. What can have happened to him at all?"

"I thought the fellow had no spirit in him at all that way," remarked Justin, in subdued tones. "Hear how he raves now! Something must have happened to him."

The stranger's voice in the next room was raised louder than before, as he cried:

"Oh, we are all slaves—abject slaves—to stand such tyrants! Oh, my dear brother, I will yet avenge your death on the cruel tyrants of our father's country!"

"I will go in and see what has happened to him," said the impulsive young Irishman from the south.

"Just wait a little while longer," said the more cautious O'Neill.

They did wait, while the stranger continued to rave bitterly. At length all was silent in the next room, and a knock was heard on the young men's door soon after.

On opening the door the silent stranger stood before them, with tears in his eyes and an open letter in his hand.

Before the young friends could say a word the man broke out, crying:

"Oh, gentlemen, I have just received such fearful news, and I am almost heartbroken with grief and rage!"

"Pray, what is the bad news, sir?" asked Theodore Falvey. "Step in."

"I have just received a letter from Canada, in which I am informed that my only brother was hung in the Northwest for taking part in the Riel rebellion. Oh, poor Tom! How dear to me he was! We were twin brothers, and we were never separated until three months ago. Oh! would that I could tear down the English tyrants the world over. They are the same wherever they have the power."

The stranger was kindly received by the two young patriots, Theodore Falvey being taken with him at once.

Not so with Justin O'Neill.

In a very short time the stranger gave a brief account of his life.

He said that his name was Mortimer Morley, and that he was born in New York, of Irish parents, who were both dead.

As those parents had left the two brothers some money, his brother Tom started out for the Northwest three months before, and had joined Louis Riel.

"I was anxious to see the home of my fathers," said Mortimer Morley, "and I came over here a month ago. I visited Killarney and other famous places, and I only got here to Dublin last week. I was down on the British government before, but I am a sworn enemy after this, and I don't care who hears it!"

Justin O'Neill warned the young man to be more careful, while he was studying him well at the same time.

The stranger from America appeared to be a young man of twenty-four, with a pair of dark, piercing eyes, a bold, handsome countenance, and with a tall form denoting great strength and activity.

He wore a full dark beard and mustache.

The three young men appeared to be great friends before an hour went by, and the American stranger laid his heart bare, as it were, before the two young Irishmen.

When O'Neill and Falvey were on their way to the secret rendezvous that night the latter said, impulsively:

"On my soul, Justin, that Morley is a splendid fellow, and he ought to be one of us very soon."

"Don't be too fast, Theo," said O'Neill, "in forming sudden friendships. I like the young man well enough, but we don't know enough about him yet at all. If the Invisible Twelve are the wise and careful men you report them, they would not take an unknown recruit, I'll go bail, even if he is an Irish-American. He may be an English spy or a detective."

"But you saw the letters of recommendation he has from New York."

"Such documents have been forged ere now. I don't say that his are, but we can't be too careful. Just wait until we see some more about him."

After reaching a certain part of Dublin the two young friends entered a cab, and they were driven off at a rattling pace.

Soon after entering the cab Theodore Falvey placed a bandage on O'Neill's eyes, saying:

"This is a mere form as far as you are concerned, old fellow; but I must obey my orders, you know."

Just two hours after, and while the two friends were re-

passing the same spot in the cab, Falvey was removing the bandage again, as he remarked:

"Well, old fellow, you passed the ordeals in a glorious manner. What do you think of our Invisible Twelve now?"

"I think that the spy or the informer who attempts to enter our ranks will have a hard task of it. Is it possible that you do not know any of them, Theo?"

"I do not, I assure you. I question even if they are known to each other."

"Why, they are even more mysterious than the secret rulers of Venice in the olden time. If a single detective or a spy could gain admittance, he would not be able to expose them."

"That is the beauty of the organization. It is almost impossible to expose us. If I were so basely inclined, I could only betray five others in all, including yourself."

"And the driver outside?"

"Yes, he is one of us."

"One of the Invisible Twelve, perhaps?" suggested young O'Neill, in a whisper.

"Who can tell? The English authorities would give a splendid reward to-morrow if they could only get at them."

"When and how do we receive orders from our leaders for action?"

"That I cannot answer, Justin. When we reach our room to-night we may find a summons before us, or one may be flung into the cab here before we get out."

"And we must obey that order?"

"Of course."

At that moment the back window of the cab was opened, and a three-cornered note was flung at Falvey's face.

Catching it on the instant, while the window was closed again, the young southerner whispered to his friend, saying:

"'Tis an order from the Twelve. I cannot read it till we are in our room."

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW RECRUIT IN THE ORDEALS.

The secret order was in a secret cipher.

On reaching their rooms, Theodore Falvey read it, explained the meaning of the characters to his friend, in subdued tones, and then burned the paper, saying, in the same cautious manner:

"Isn't it singular that it relates to our friend in the next room, and that we are ordered to cultivate his acquaintance, with a view to getting him to join the Brotherhood, without telling him too much at the same time?"

"It is singular," said Justin. "The Invisible Twelve must have known him before we did. Of course, we will obey, but you must be cautious, Theo."

"I leave him in your hands, as I am ordered, old fellow, and I will not even pretend that I know anything about the Brotherhood. You must initiate him."

"I will if he wishes, and it is so ordered," said O'Neill, "but I cannot imagine why I am thus selected."

"I can. The Twelve consider, very wisely, that you have the most sense. Just remember one thing, will you?"

"What is that?"

"This Mortimer Morley in the next room must be a very important personage."

"Why is that?"

"Because it seldom happens that the Invisible Twelve seek recruits, unless they are persons of some consequence," answered young Falvey, in low, serious tones.

Justin O'Neill pondered some moments in silence, and then said:

"It may be that the young man is suspected of being a spy."

"It may be so. If he is, may heaven help him if he joins us."

The two friends soon retired to bed, being very careful that no one could overhear them.

Before another meeting-night of the Brotherhood came around, Justin O'Neill was very intimate with the young Irish-American, who had succeeded in getting employment as a reporter on one of the Dublin papers.

Without much inducement on O'Neill's part, Morley expressed a desire to join a patriotic association, and he was proposed in the mysterious Brotherhood governed by the Invisible Twelve.

On a certain night O'Neill accompanied his new friends to a certain location in the city, where a covered cab awaited to bear them away.

Justin bandaged the eyes of the young Irish-American as the

vehicle rattled along the streets, and it was over half an hour before they arrived at the rendezvous.

Before either of the young men could get out of the cab O'Neill was also blindfolded by a masked stranger, who appeared at the door of the vehicle the moment it stopped, and they were both secured by cords as well.

They were then led in through a long passage with a good many windings, until they reached a square room which was dimly lighted, and which contained only two large arm-chairs in the way of furniture.

Having been placed in front of each other in the chairs, the bandages and cords were removed, and then a loud voice, as if speaking through a trumpet, fell on their ears, saying:

"Young man, known as Mortimer Morley, you wish to join the Invincible Brotherhood, governed by the Invisible Twelve?"

"I do," answered the stranger, in clear, bold tones.

"Do you know the objects of our organization, and do you approve of them?"

"I know the objects, and I do approve of them to the letter."

"Are you prepared to obey the Invisible Twelve in all public matters?"

"I am."

"Will you die for your country, if necessary?"

"I will."

"Will you slay any of your country's enemies at our command?"

"I will."

"Even though that enemy may be your best friend, or even a dear relative?"

"If the person be an enemy of Ireland, or a friend to English misrule, I pledge my oath to slay him at your bidding," replied Morley, in the same clear, bold tones.

"Then slay Justin O'Neill, the person now in front of you!" thundered the voice through the trumpet, "as he has been tried by the Invisible Twelve and found guilty of high treason to Ireland. Strike!"

As the last word was thundered forth a large dagger fell in front of Morley, while Justin O'Neill started in his chair as if the weapon had already pierced him.

Without scarcely a moment's hesitation the young Irish-American stooped down and picked up the weapon, as he cried:

"I will obey you in all things, although I must say that——"

"Strike and be silent!" thundered the voice through the trumpet. "We are the judges and you the executioner. The Invisible Twelve never err. Justin O'Neill is a traitor to the cause."

"It is false!" cried young O'Neill, springing to his feet in fearless agitation. "Even though the statement were made by the spirit of the immortal Emmet himself. Every true pulse of my hearts beats for Ireland, and such will be my dying declaration. Strike, if such is my sentence!"

And the brave young fellow held each hand toward his heart, while he faced the executioner of his invisible judges.

A pitying glance appeared on the countenance of the young Irish-American as he drew back to strike, raising the dagger aloft at the same moment.

Before the weapon could fall, however, the loud voice rang out again, crying:

"Hold a few moments, Mortimer Morley, or whatever your name may be. Justin O'Neill, do you still assert that you are true to the cause of Ireland? Do not die with a falsehood on your tongue."

"A falsehood has never stained my tongue, and I would not utter one now to save my life," was the firm reply.

"If you are innocent the dagger will not do its duty. Strike now, stranger!"

Morley grasped the weapon with a tighter clasp, and he pressed his lips together as if to nerve himself for the fatal blow, when his hand fell suddenly to his side, the dagger dropped on the floor, and he staggered back, crying:

"My hand is palsied!"

"O'Neill is innocent!" cried the voice through the trumpet, "as the dagger refuses to strike. Salute our brave brother, members of the Invisible Twelve."

A bright light streamed into the room on the instant, and then out from twelve closets, hitherto unseen, stalked as many ghostly figures.

Three of the figures appeared from each of the four sides of the bare apartment, and they kept advancing in silent order until they formed a square around the two young men.

Morley and O'Neill stared in wonder at the apparitions thus suddenly appearing to them, and the latter said to himself:

"They may well be called the Invisible Twelve, and no mistake, as they appear like mere shadows in those guises."

The forms thus appearing were completely covered by light, gauzy substances, extending from the tops of their heads clear down to the soles of their feet, and covering the arms and hands as well.

Each of the twelve held a speaking-trumpet in the left hand, the mouth of which was held close to the gauzy lips of the invisible judges, while a long dagger was raised aloft in the right hand.

Having closed around the young men in compact order, the voice thundered forth again, as if each used the trumpet in one breath, crying:

"Take your seats again, young men—and you seize the dagger, O'Neill."

The order was obeyed on the instant, and the voice continued:

"Mortimer Morley, as you call yourself, what was your true purpose in joining our secret brotherhood?"

"Justice for Ireland and vengeance on her cruel enemies."

"Liar!"

The insulting word was trumpeted forth by all the voices in the most thrilling manner, while the twelve daggers were pointed at the breast of the young recruit.

Then all was as silent as the grave.

Drawing a long breath, while his face was flushed with agitation, the young Irish-American answered, in calm, bold tones:

"I am not a liar. I have stated the sole purpose I had in joining your organization. I hate the English tyrants, and I would be avenged on them."

"Spy! we know you!" thundered forth the trumpets in fiercer tones.

The young man thus accused turned a little paler, but his voice was as firm as before, when he replied:

"If you do know me you are but playing with me now, as you must be aware that I am not a spy."

"Foul English detective from Canada, your course is run!" again thundered the trumpets of the Invisible Twelve. "Justin O'Neill, you must execute the spy who would betray you and your friend."

CHAPTER III.

WHO WAS THE NEW RECRUIT?

Justin O'Neill was startled anew by the strange turn of affairs, but he picked up the dagger, as commanded.

Still pointing all their weapons at the new recruit, the Invisible Twelve thundered forth in one voice:

"Justin O'Neill, we solemnly assure you that the wretch before you is an English spy from Canada and that he has come over here expressly to betray you and other true Irishmen. Will you strike?"

"Justin O'Neill," cried the accused, "I swear to you that I am not a spy, and that I was never in Canada in my life. If I am condemned and executed by you, you will be taking an innocent life."

"I am sworn to obey the Invisible Twelve," answered the young Irishman, in determined but sad tones, as he arose from the chair, holding the dagger aloft, "yet I would like some clear proof of your guilt."

"Is it not enough that we have condemned him?" thundered forth the Twelve, in one voice.

"It is. I will obey you. Give the order and I will strike."

And Justin drew back as if waiting the word to deal the blow, while he kept his eyes fixed on those of Morley.

The young Irish-American met the glance without flinching, and he then turned on the ghostly figures around him, crying:

"I will not appeal to you to spare my life, as I know that it must be useless if your minds are made up."

"They are. You are guilty, and you must die!" was the trumpet-toned reply.

"But surely you should give some proof of my guilt besides mere words."

"We will, if it were only to convince O'Neill that we are just. Open there to the left and behold!"

The words were scarcely uttered when one side of the room gave way, the lights were lowered in the apartment and a bright scene was presented on the stage to the left.

Two life-like figures appeared on the stage, one of which Justin O'Neill at once recognized as that of the chief of the Dublin secret police, while the other bore a striking re-

semblance to the new recruit, with the exception of the beard and mustache.

"Who is the older man, Justin O'Neill?" demanded the trumpet voices.

"The chief of the secret police."

"Who is his companion?"

"He resembles this young man, barring the whiskers."

"Pluck the false whiskers off and then look."

Mortimer Morley held his face forward for O'Neill to seize his beard, as he cried, in indignant tones:

"My whiskers are not false, and I defy any one to remove them, except with a scissors and a razor. Tug away, friend."

Justin did tug away with all his might, pulling forth a handful of hair from the roots, but he could not remove the beard or the mustache.

While the young Irishman was thus engaged the new recruit kept staring at the life-like figure on the stage, as he kept muttering between his teeth:

"Good heavens, can it be? It is so like him! What infernal mystery is this, and how can I fathom it?"

"The traitor's beard is glued to his face!" thundered forth the trumpet voices. "But he cannot deceive us. Down with the lights and on with the false beard."

The lights on the stage were lowered on the instant, while Morley cried:

"My beard is not false, and I will stake my life on the fact. Put me to any test you please and see."

"Up with the lights!"

The lights on the stage were turned on again, and then an exclamation of surprise burst from Justin O'Neill.

The life-size figure before him was an exact counterpart of the new recruit as he then appeared, as false whiskers had been placed on the model.

"Justin O'Neill," cried the trumpet voices, "the man before you was tracked to the office of the chief of police, and he was overheard conspiring with him, as you now see them represented by our artists. Will the traitor dare deny his guilt now?"

"I do," replied Morley, in as calm tones as ever. "If you are the just judges you claim to be you will put me to a better test. I positively assert that a razor has not touched my face for two years past, and how then could I appear as in the first picture? I do not know the chief of police, and I was never in his office."

"Then have you a brother who resembles you so much?" asked the voices.

"I had a twin brother who resembled me, but he is dead."

"Where did he die?"

"In Canada, as I can prove by a letter I received a week ago."

"Is it not possible that the report of his death was false?"

"It cannot be, as I received a letter written by him an hour before his execution, and it was forwarded to me by the clergyman who waited on him, and who wrote to tell me that my brother died on the gallows at the time mentioned."

"What was he accused of?"

"He fought under Louis Riel against the English in the Northwest."

"Lower the lights—adjourn!" cried the trumpet voice on the instant.

Then all was silent and in darkness.

Justin O'Neill gave a sigh of relief as he dropped the dagger and flung himself on the chair, muttering:

"Thank heaven, I am not called upon to take a human life!"

When the dim light appeared in the square room again, Mortimer Morley was standing before Justin with his arms folded on his breast, and the Invisible Twelve had disappeared.

Before the young Irishman could say a word to his friend the trumpet voice was heard again, crying:

"Mortimer Morley, the Invisible Twelve announce a reprieve for you. Are you still ready to join our band?"

"I am."

"Will you be willing to slay your own brother if you are assured that he is alive and in league with the English tyrants?"

"If my brother lives and is now serving England against the sons of freedom he will be my mortal enemy, and I will treat him as such."

"Then steel your heart for the execution, as we will present him to you for your dagger within an hour."

"And prove to me that he is guilty?"

"Beyond all doubt!"

"Then I will be prepared to strike the blow, although I loved him above all on this earth!"

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH WAS THE BRITISH SPY?

When Justin O'Neill was left face to face with the young American in the otherwise deserted apartment, only a very dim light appeared therein, and all was silent for the time.

The young Irishman looked at the accused with earnest eyes, but he did not offer to speak a word to him, while his own thoughts were as busy as possible.

Justin was reviewing his short acquaintance with the young reporter, as he kept saying to himself:

"Can it be possible that he is a spy, or is it the twin brother?"

Mortimer Morley did not attempt to break the oppressive silence for some time, as he was also engaged in a painful mental study, while he kept muttering below his breath:

"Can it be possible that my brother Tom saved his neck in Canada by turning spy for the British government? It will be terrible if it is so, and I am called upon to be his executioner. I can never do it, and they are fiends if they demand it of me."

Justin O'Neill broke the silence at last by saying, in subdued tones:

"Whether you are guilty or innocent, Mr. Morley, I can assure you that I did not know of the charge against you when I led you to this place."

"I believe you, friend," responded Morley, "and I'll have no ill-feeling against you, no matter what happens, as the adventure was of my own seeking. I am not only innocent myself, but I am positive that if my brother is alive he is not a spy in the pay of the British government."

"Was he as bitter against the English as you are?"

"Far more so. That was the reason he joined Riel in Canada."

"But is it not possible that he accepted the position in order to save his life when threatened with the gallows?"

"I can't believe it. Tom was as brave as a lion, and he was the very soul of honor as well. He would scorn to live as a traitor and informer."

"Well, well," said Justin, with a sigh, "I do not know what to make of it."

"Have patience and you may soon know," cried a voice through a trumpet. "The Invisible Twelve are after the other, if other there be."

"I hope they'll never catch him," said young Morley to himself. "Tom is a smart fellow, and they'll be very keen if they entrap him, if he should be a spy."

All was silent again, Justin O'Neill not caring to speak, fearing that he might help to entrap the young American by some unintentional remark.

Although Mortimer Morley's life was in great danger, he appeared to be the calmest of the two while thus awaiting further developments, as the suspense caused large drops of perspiration to fall from the brow of the earnest young Irishman.

At length the room was completely darkened again, and Justin then felt that some one was placing a covering on his face, as well as a mantle or cloak over his body.

In a few minutes the light appeared once more, and then each of the young men could perceive that black masks had been placed on their faces, while long, dark cloaks completely enveloped their bodies.

"Do not utter a word or make a motion until you are addressed," ran out the trumpet-toned voice. "Justin O'Neill, you appear here as a witness."

The intense suspense was not yet over, as the apartment was darkened again and then all was as silent as before.

It seemed an age to Justin O'Neill before the end of the room was drawn aside again, and the bright stage appeared as in the former scene, without the figures.

The two young men then beheld a scaffold in the background, and it seemed to draw nearer and nearer every moment, until it was right in front of the stage, but no life-like figure appeared.

When the scaffold became fixed the trumpet voice rang out again, saying:

"The Invisible Twelve will appear."

Almost on the instant the twelve forms in gauze glided out on the stage and took positions around the scaffold, each holding a trumpet in his covered right hand.

Then a figure in black, and wearing a mask of the same hue, appeared on the back of the scaffold holding a rope, the other end of which was attached to a young man's neck.

Mortimer Morley started on beholding the face of the young man, as he mentally exclaimed:

"Gracious heavens, it is my brother Tom!"

"Attention, witnesses!" cried a voice through the trumpet, as all of the Twelve placed the instruments to their mouths.

The prisoner stood on the scaffold beside the executioner, and he stared around him in some surprise, as he cried, in a bold and defiant voice:

"What in thunder does all this mean, and why have I been roped in here?"

"'Tis my brother Tom and no mistake!" gasped Mortimer Morley to himself. "Thank goodness he's alive, and I'll bet my life he is not an English spy or a traitor."

"You will soon learn, prisoner!" cried the voice through the trumpet. "What is your real name?"

"What is that your business?" was the saucy reply. "If this is a free country I'd like to know why I am dragged here? Who in thunder are you, anyhow?"

"That is Tom all out," muttered Mortimer Morley to himself. "I am now still more certain that he is not guilty."

"This is not a free country, prisoner," answered the trumpet voice, "but we are combined to make it as free as your own, and you are working against us."

"If you mean that I am working with the British government, it is an infernal lie, as I hate the English as bad as any Irishman in the world."

"Were you not with Louis Riel in Canada?"

"Yes, I was."

"Were you not taken and sentenced to be hung by the English?"

"That is the truth."

"Then how came you to escape?"

The prisoner hesitated for some moments, and then made answer:

"I don't know by what right you question me, but I will tell you plainly that I cannot divulge the secret of my escape from the gallows in Canada."

"It is not necessary, Thomas Morley," cried the trumpet voice, "as we know the secret already. You were secretly pardoned, and a dummy put in your place, on condition that you would act as a spy and an informer here in Ireland."

The prisoner glared around at the Invisible Twelve in the most defiant manner, as he boldly answered:

"If they were the last words I ever spoke, I'll tell you all to your teeth that that is an infernal lie. The British government had nothing to do with my release. On the contrary, the authorities in Canada believe me to be dead now."

"Then why is it that you were seen in consultation with the chief of the English detective force in this city?"

"I went to visit him on private business which had nothing to do with politics."

"You have a brother living, we believe?" continued the voice.

"Yes, I have a twin brother residing in New York City."

"Did you write to him telling him that you had escaped from the gallows?"

"I did not."

"Why did you not write to him?"

The prisoner hesitated again, as though studying what answer to make.

"Why did you not write to your brother, telling him that you escaped from the scaffold?" thundered the trumpet voice louder than before.

"I will not answer you another question until I know who you are. If I were in Russia I could not be treated worse," answered Tom Morley, in sullen tones.

"You are before a secret tribunal of those who are combined to free the land of their birth and punish traitors."

"And am I to understand that I am accused of treachery?"

"You are accused of being a spy in the service of the English, and that your aim is to join our society and then betray us to the authorities."

"And the only proof against me is paying some visits to the chief of the detective force?"

"That is not all," answered the voice through the trumpet. "It is known that you are on intimate terms with a person who is known to be a merciless tyrant and an inveterate foe to Irish freedom."

Tom Morley started and colored on hearing the fresh accusation, and then said:

"You allude to Lord Bascom!"

Justin O'Neill started also on hearing the name mentioned by the prisoner, as it was that of the man against whom he had sworn dire vengeance.

The trumpet voice rang out again, crying:

"We allude to Lord Bascom, prisoner, and you cannot deny that you are on intimate terms with that cruel wretch."

"I'll not admit or deny anything on that subject, as I would be ashamed of myself if I permitted you to draw my private secrets from me. All I will say is this: My acquaintance with Lord Bascom has no connection whatever with politics."

"We know better. You saved his life in Canada, and he in turn saved you from the gallows, on the condition that you would become a spy on the Irish patriots."

"That is not the truth!" cried Tom Morley, in earnest and impulsive tones. "It is true that I saved his life in Canada, but he had no more to do with saving mine than either of you ghosts. In honest truth, he does not know me by my real name."

"Then why do you visit his house under an assumed name?"

"That is my private affair, and I will not answer the question even to save my life. I tell you to your teeth that I am as true a friend of liberty as either of you, and I would chop off my right hand before I would fight against Ireland in any way."

"That is the solemn truth," cried Mortimer Morley, in hoarse tones.

"Silence!" thundered the trumpet voice. "Gag the witness."

The lights were lowered on the instant, and Mortimer Morley soon felt strong hands securing his arms and placing a gag on his mouth at the same time.

When the place was illuminated again the young American could see that his Irish friend had been treated in the same manner.

Tom Morley started on hearing his brother's hoarse voice, but he failed to recognize it, little dreaming that Mortimer was in Ireland at the time.

The trumpet voice then rang out again, crying:

"Then you refuse to give us any explanation of your suspicious movements, prisoner?"

"Certainly I do. As I said before, the movements you allude to were all made by me on private business, which I will not divulge to you or to the public. If you are Irish patriots, you would despise me if I answered your questions freely."

"Adjourn!"

The word was scarcely uttered when all was darkness again.

The two young men then felt hands on their bodies, the handcuffs were removed from their wrists and the gags from their mouths at the same time.

A dim light then appeared in the square apartment, while a trumpet voice rang out, crying:

"The Invisible Twelve have not as yet decided which is the British spy. Justin O'Neill, you will depart in peace, and your companion will remain as our guest for the present."

The young Irishman was then led out through the winding passages, and he soon found himself in the covered car with his friend, Theodore Falvey.

As they rattled along over the pavement Falvey placed his mouth to the other's ear and whispered:

"What do you think of them now?"

"It is wonderful," returned Justin.

"Nonsense, man, that is nothing to what you will see."

"But what about the young Americans, Theo? I cannot believe that either of them is a British spy."

"If that is the case, you may be certain that the Twelve will soon find out the truth, and you may be sure that they'll not be punished on mere suspicion."

"But what can the other be doing with Lord Bascom?"

"How can I tell? Perhaps he is after his handsome daughter."

And young Falvey gave a merry chuckle at the joke, as the young woman in question was as ugly as sin, while it was also reported that she was "touched in the head."

It was near midnight when the young men reached the lodging-house, and they were somewhat surprised on finding a visitor awaiting them in their own room.

The visitor was a low-sized young man, wearing a full brown beard and eyeglasses, and he was dressed after the manner of the dandies of the city.

"Which of you is Justin O'Neill?" asked the stranger, in abrupt tones.

"That is my name, sir," answered Justin.

"Do you know Mortimer Morley?"

"I do."

"Where is he now?"

"That is more than I can tell you, sir."

"It is more than you will tell me, you mean, as I can see by your eyes," said the stranger, in angry tones. "Very well,

young man. Perhaps you will answer the police better when you are arrested."

And the stranger was moving toward the door, when young Falvey placed his back to it, saying, in merry tones:

"No, you don't, my friend. You can't leave here until we are better acquainted. Who are you, and what do you want with Mr. Mortimer Morley to-night?"

The stranger drew a small revolver and pointed it at Theo as he answered, in still more angry tones:

"Get out of my way, fellow!"

Justin O'Neill made a sudden movement and caught the dandy's wrist, the weapon falling from his grasp at the same moment without exploding.

"You impudent rascal!" cried Falvey, as he seized the intruder and flung him on the bed, clapping a pillow over his face to keep him from crying out, "we'll teach you to come any of your nonsense with us!"

"Don't smother him!" cried Justin, as he tore away the pillow. "By the living Jupiter, it is a woman!"

The high hat was knocked from the stranger's head in the struggle, and so were the false beard and eyeglasses.

"If it isn't mad Polly Bascom herself!" exclaimed young Falvey, starting back.

Justin O'Neill drew back also, and the young woman sprang from the bed on the floor, while her eyes were blazing with fury, as she cried:

"Oh, you rude wretch, I'll make you suffer for this insult! How dare you lay hands on me in that manner!"

Theodore Falvey was almost choking with suppressed laughter, while his more serious friend addressed the young woman, saying:

"Miss Bascom, you must remember that we did not know that you were a lady."

"On my honor," laughed Falvey, as he bowed and pressed his hand to his heart, "we'd kill ourselves before we'd lay hands on you if we knew you, Miss Bascom."

"You're a pair of villains, anyway, I believe!" cried the young woman, as she proceeded to arrange her disguise again. "But I'll forgive you if you will tell me about Mr. Mortimer Morley."

"Really, young lady," said Justin, "you surprise us very much. We are not the young gentleman's keepers, if we do happen to lodge here with him."

"But he left here with you to-night, as you cannot deny."

"That is true."

"Then, why has he not returned with you, I'd like to know?"

Before the young man could answer the door was flung open and Mortimer Morley himself entered the room.

CHAPTER V.

MAD POLLY ON THE RAMPAGE.

The young woman had completed her disguise at the moment, and when Mort Morley stared at her, she stared back in turn through her glasses, as she remarked, in gruff tones:

"Hallo! Who is this?"

The two young students saw at once that she was not acquainted with their last visitor, and Falvey winked at each of his male friends as he cried:

"Why, this is the gentleman whom you were inquiring about, sir. It is very strange that you do not know him after all this fuss."

The disguised young woman sprang at Mortimer, seized him by the hand and looked earnestly in his bearded face, as she asked:

"Are you really Mr. Mortimer Morley?"

"That is my name, sir," answered Mort, as he stared at one and the other of the young students, as if seeking information.

"And you are Tom Morley's brother? Hush! I hope we are all friends here."

And the young woman cast anxious glances at the young students.

"I hope so," answered young Falvey, with a roguish smile, "providing you have not come to hang us all."

"You be hanged! Tell me if you are really Tom Morley's brother, sir?"

The young woman pressed Mort's hand all the closer as he answered:

"I had a brother of that name, sir, but he is dead. Pray, who are you?"

"He is not dead, I tell you—that is, if he was not killed to-night. And you want to know who I am?"

"Indeed I do."

"Did you ever hear of Mad Polly Bascom, the only daughter of a lord of that name?"

"I never did," answered Mort, with a smile. "Is it possible that you are a lady?"

"Yes, I am; and a handsome lady at that, as your brother can tell you. What are you laughing at, you impudent monkey? Take that!"

And the lively creature gave Falvey a box on the ear that fairly staggered him.

"Gracious!" cried the rogue, "but I only wish you were your brother, or uncle, for five minutes or so, my lady."

"What for? You think you would be able to thrash me then, I suppose?"

"I'd try, anyway."

The excitable creature made a spring for the boxing gloves in the corner of the room, as she cried:

"Let us try now. I'll wager you a good supper for the party, Tom included, that I knock you all to pieces. By the way, where is Tom?"

The giddy young woman became serious again, and turned to Mort as she asked the question.

"I'm sure I cannot answer you, young lady, if you are a young lady."

"Oh, what a liar you are! You are all great liars!"

"See here, Miss Bascom," cried Justin O'Neill, in stern tones, "it is high time you stopped this nonsense, and tell us what you really want."

"I tell you I want Tom Morley, who is known at our house as Ferdinand Morehead. I can keep a secret."

"Why did you come here to seek him?"

"Because the rascals who whipped him away from me to-night told me to come here to find him. Oh, how green we are!"

"Where did they whip him away from you?"

"Down in the 'Cat and the Bagpipes,' where we were having supper. You know, Tom and I were out on the rampage."

"May I ask you where you first met my brother, young lady?" inquired Mort.

"Of course you may, but it is a dead secret that he is alive at all. Father would hang him if he knew who he really is, you know. But I can keep a secret, if I am a little mad. We are all friends here, I am sure."

And the young woman gave Falvey another gentle tap on the side of the head.

"Thunder and blazes!" cried the lively young fellow, "but I'm afraid I'll have to put on the gloves to you if you were a lady a hundred times over."

"Wait till we settle the serious business first, and I'll be happy to accommodate you. I met your brother in Canada,

sir, where the brave fellow saved father's life and mine at the greatest possible risk to himself. That's why I like him."

"Then I suppose you helped to secure him from the gallows after?" said Mort.

"I'm not in a boasting humor, young man, and I won't answer you. Where is my dear Tom?"

"I told you before, young lady, that I cannot answer you, but I am able to say that he is alive and well, and that I hope you will not seek to find out where he is for the present."

"I understand you now. No, I will not, as he warned me to trust in him and not make a fuss about him, no matter what happened. Oh, I can be as silent as death!"

The three young men were sorely puzzled at the turn of affairs, although they each and all felt somewhat relieved by the crazy creature's explanations.

Muddled as those explanations were, it was evident to them all that Tom Morley was not in league with Lord Bascom in working against the Irish patriots.

The character of the eccentric young creature before them was well known to the two young students, and they were not surprised at anything she might do.

Polly Bascom was famed as a wild young woman, who attended race-courses and hunts, where she would at times cut up the most outlandish capers, to the great chagrin of her father, who doted on her.

While the young woman was full of life and mischief, not a single word was ever whispered against her fair name, as she was a pronounced man-hater, and she never gave the least encouragement to any of the many fortune-hunters who attempted to seek her hand in marriage.

Polly Bascom was positively ugly, and her voice and her manners were as rough as her unprepossessing face.

Yet it was said that she could be gentle and soft-tongued at times, while more than one poor person blessed her for the donations bestowed on them in secret.

When Polly was a handsome girl of fourteen she met with a fearful accident by being thrown from her horse, and then her father took her to Paris for medical treatment.

When she returned with him, three years after, she was a perfect fright, and her mind was impaired also.

The young woman was just nineteen on the evening in question.

Whatever may have been the defects in her face and mind, Polly possessed a splendid form.

She was a little above the average height, and she had a pair of arms that would be envied by the best of the lightweight champions.

Having expressed herself as satisfied with the explanation given her, the young woman turned to the door again, when her eyes fell on the boxing-gloves, and she sprang toward them, crying:

"Now I'll try you a bout with the gloves, you impudent rascal, or do you prefer the bare knuckles? Oh, there's my own darling Tom! Hurrah!"

And the lively creature sprang toward the door of the room to fling her arms around Tom Morley, who had just entered.

The young fellow returned the warm embrace with like ardor, as he held out his hand to his brother, crying:

"Hallo, Mort, old fellow! How are you, and when in the mischief did you come over to Ireland? Do you know this person?"

Mort clasped his brother's hand warmly as he replied:

"Yes, I know that person. Oh, Tom, I thought you were dead!"

"Not much. Speak low, old fellow, as I am not Tom now. All true friends here, I trust? Introduce me."

Mort introduced his brother to the young student, while Polly said:

"Tom, won't you bet that I can whip Mr. Falvey with the gloves?"

"Of course, my dear, but we'll have to try it some other night as it is late now. Mort, I will see you early in the morning. My name is Ferdinand Morehead now."

"And I am Mrs. Morehead, gentlemen," said Polly, as she clasped Tom's arm. "Good-night, and joy be with you all."

And the couple disappeared down the stairs, while Theodore Falvey clapped his hands on his knees as he said, in merry tones:

"Hang my eyes, if I don't believe she is a trump after all, and that she is not half as mad as she pretends. I say, Morley, your brother is in luck, if she is really his wife, as she is as rich as any one."

"Blame me if I know what to make of it," said Mort, rubbing his head. "It seems as if I was in a dream all the night."

"If you had got the cracks from her I did," grinned Falvey, "you would soon wake out of it."

"I tell you what it is, friends," said the sober O'Neill, "I don't like the idea of that young woman being mixed up with us, good or bad. What is this?"

The young man stooped down and picked up a triangular-shaped envelope lying on the floor as he spoke, while Falvey said:

"Hang me, if it isn't a message from the Twelve! Let us read it."

The young student opened the envelope, drew out a slip of paper, and studied it for some moments ere he said:

"This is wonderful, all right! Will you guess what we are ordered to do?"

"What is it?" asked Mort Morley. "Oh, I hope it is not anything against Tom!"

"Faith, no. Ha! ha! ha!"

And young Falvey chuckled at a furious rate, while O'Neill said:

"Out with it at once and ease our minds, will you, Theo?"

"Ease your minds, indeed! 'Pon my conscience, but I think our leaders have lost their senses, out and out."

"Is it anything about Tom?" asked young Morley again.

"A little. Who do you think we are ordered to introduce into the order? Hang me, if it isn't Mad Polly herself!"

The three young men stared at each other for some moments in open wonder, until Justin O'Neill tore the order from Falvey's hand, saying:

"Confound you, you rogue, you are playing a joke on us! As I live, here it is in the secret cipher. Well, well, if that does not beat all! What can be their object in getting that mad creature in with us?"

"To strike at her father, of course," answered young Falvey, in serious tones.

The young fellow then laughed heartily, as he continued:

"Oh, gracious! what fun we are going to have! Just think of Mad Polly before the Invisible Twelve!"

"Speak easier, Falvey," said O'Neill. "I must confess that I don't like this business at all."

"Why not, man? I wouldn't miss it for all the world. 'Tis you who are to introduce the dear creature, Morley."

"The mischief you say!" gasped the young American. "Friends, I'll be hanged if this business don't seem like a farce to me."

"Hush, hush!" cautioned O'Neill, in low, serious tones. "Farce or no farce, we must obey the Invisible Twelve. You passed clear to-night, I see, Morley?"

"Yes, and I almost wish I didn't now."

"Come, come, friends," said Falvey, "there's no use in our crying over the matter. You may be certain that the Invisibles have good reason for what they are doing. As for my part, I can assure you that we will never be ordered to do a mean action by them. As you see, they gave your brother a fair trial and he is free. It must be he who left the order here."

"That's true," said O'Neill, "unless it was Polly herself. Come to think of it now, I have heard that she is a rebel, and that she opposes her father in politics."

"Oh, gracious, what a joke!" exclaimed Falvey. "To think of Mad Polly Bascom being in with us."

"Are you speaking of my daughter, sir?" cried a fierce voice, as the door was flung open and a tall, stern-looking man of fifty stood at the threshold, while half a dozen policemen were ranged behind him.

Without waiting to answer, young Falvey flung the envelope and the secret message in the fire and clapped his foot thereon, while Justin O'Neill exclaimed:

"Lord Bascom, by all that's wicked!"

"Yes, Master O'Neill, and I am here to arrest you and your friends on a charge of high treason. Seize them, officers!"

CHAPTER VI.

MAD POLLY TO THE RESCUE.

Mort Morley drew back on seeing Lord Bascom and the officers, but Justin O'Neill advanced to meet them, as he said, with great dignity:

"I understand you, Lord Bascom. You fear that I would avenge the cruel death of my father, and you wish to get me out of the way, but you will be disappointed. Stand back, officers, and hear me."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Lord Bascom, in furious tones, "do you dare offer resistance to the officers of the law? Use your weapons on the young rebels, officers!"

"Kill me, if you will," cried Justin, folding his arms on his breast, "but you can see that I do not resist the officers. Oh, would that I had the power! Lord Bascom, as sure as you are a living man, your day will soon come!"

"And his hour has come now!" cried Theo Falvey, as he drew a revolver and pointed it at the tyrant's head. "Advance a step, officers, and I will put a bullet through Lord Bascom's head on the instant! Back with you!"

"And I'll stand by you!" cried Mort Morley, drawing a revolver at the same moment. "If you miss him, you may be certain I won't, friend!"

Lord Bascom drew back on the instant, as he cried to the police:

"Hold on, or they will murder me! You young rascals, you will suffer dearly for this insolence—and you cannot escape!"

At that moment Mad Polly forced her way through the police and pushed into the room in her male attire, crying:

"What's all this row about? Hallo, my lord! What are you doing here?"

Lord Bascom stared in surprise at his daughter, and then said:

"I beg you to retire, sir, as this is no affair of yours."

The man had recognized his half-crazy daughter, whom he both loved and feared, and he wished to get rid of her without exposure.

But the self-willed young woman was not to be put off so easily.

Advancing to her father, and speaking in jovial but hoarse tones, she cried:

"See here, my lord, am I not an old friend of yours?"

"Of course you are."

"Then why not tell me what all this row is about?"

"Those young men are under arrest under a serious charge, sir, and they are resisting the officers, as you see."

"What is the charge against them?"

"High treason."

"High fiddlesticks! My lord, I will go their security, as they are friends of mine. Let the officers retire."

The young woman then whispered a few words to her father, who stamped his foot impatiently, saying:

"Officers, you will retire, but see that you guard the street door."

As the officers were retiring down the stairs, the disguised young woman turned to Mort Morley and his friend, saying:

"Put up your pistols, as we will not have any bloodshed to-night. I will accommodate either of you in the morning, if you like such fun."

Theodore Falvey put away his pistol, as he laughingly replied:

"That cannot be, as we never fight with our true friends."

Lord Bascom was still fuming with rage, as he felt certain that the young men knew his disguised daughter, and he said:

"You will not be in a position to fight a duel in the morning, I warrant, my impertinent young gentleman."

The versatile young woman seized her father by the arm and drew him out of the room, saying:

"I have often told you that you go too far, sir. Good-night, sirs, and do not rest in peace."

She then led her father downstairs and out into the street, while Falvey hastened to the window, saying:

"That means that we had better clear out, my friends, if we do not wish to be lodged in prison. Egad! I see that the police are moving away!"

Justin O'Neill sighed wearily, as he said, in bitter tones:

"I knew that I was a marked man, but I hoped to be able to remain in Ireland until I struck a good blow for vengeance and for liberty. Now I suppose we must fly to escape the dungeon."

"I can't see why we can't remain here in spite of the tyrants," said Mort Morley. "The Invisible Twelve must have good hiding-places. Besides, what is to hinder us from disguising ourselves?"

"That's the ticket!" said Mad Polly, entering the room again and closing the door after her. "You must disguise yourselves and hide for the present, as the governor is bitter against the three of you, and O'Neill here in particular. What does he hate you so much for, young gent?"

Justin hesitated to reply, and then the young woman went on:

"Oh, it doesn't matter, if you don't wish to tell me. I suppose you belong to a rebel family?"

"That I do, young lady. Your father hounded mine to death."

"Indeed! Then you must hate the governor very much."

"You may swear to that."

"I am very sorry for it, as the governor is not a bad man, although he is a little bitter against the Irish rebels. Now, it happens that I differ with him on that point."

"We should judge so, from the kind way in which you acted to-night," said Justin, in warm tones.

"Oh, that was nothing, as I often stop the governor from going too far. Now, I want to make a bargain with you all."

"What is the nature of the bargain, young lady?" asked O'Neill.

"If you are not all sworn to punish my father, you soon will be, as he is going for you in spite of me. If you will promise me to spare his life I will swear to warn you and rescue you when in danger. Is it a bargain, gents?"

Justin shook his head and looked at the others, as he replied:

"I cannot promise anything of the kind, as your father is the sworn enemy of our country and mine also."

"Nor I," answered Falvey.

"And I am with you, friends," replied Mort Morley, "although I would like to oblige the young lady."

The young woman pondered for some moments, and then turned to Justin, saying:

"I cannot well blame you, but I must not join you against my own father. Who are the Invisible Twelve you were speaking about as I entered?"

The young men exchanged significant glances, and Justin answered:

"It is a social club of that name that we belong to."

"Well, all I've got to say is that you plot against the government at your meetings, and my father knows it. I am certain that he has a spy among you."

"It would be very difficult for a dozen true Irishmen to get together without their talking treason, young lady," said Justin, in careless tones. "As to their being a spy among us, we do not fear him."

"See here, gents, I'd like to join the club you speak of, and then I'll wager that I detect the spy. I hate all spies and cowardly informers, you must know."

Justin O'Neill smiled at the proposition, and then said:

"We may initiate you, but we must first know that you are a true friend of the cause. But I forget that you are a lady."

"Then keep on forgetting it, as I can act the part of a man as well as any of you, and as to my patriotism, I am going to give you another proof of it."

"In what way?" asked Justin.

"You are certain to be arrested to-night if you remain here. Come with me now and I will place you all in a safe hiding-place. Will you come?"

As the young woman asked the question a furious knock was heard at the street door.

Young Falvey, who was looking out of the window again, then cried:

"The police are back in full force, my dear friends."

"Then come with me and I will save you yet," said the young woman, eagerly, as she advanced to the door. "Don't hesitate, or you will soon be in prison."

The young men did not hesitate, as they all followed the disguised young woman, who at once led them down the back stairs and then into the yard.

Mad Polly made her way across the yard and over a wall as if familiar with the locality, and the three young men followed her in silence.

The police had gained the lodging-house in the meantime, and they were making a great fuss in searching for the young men, Lord Bascom urging them on in very loud tones.

Once over the wall, the fugitives gained a small lane, and from thence they got out into a back street.

The adventurous young woman, who walked beside Mort Morley and chatted with him in a pleasant manner, then led them along through several well-known streets until they reached another lane or alleyway, which was at the rear of a fashionable square.

"Will I see Tom again to-night?" asked Mort, as they stopped before a gloomy building in the lane.

"To be sure," was the reply, "as we are at his lodgings now."

The young woman was about to open a door with a key, when Justin O'Neill interrupted her, saying:

"If I mistake not, we are now at the back of Lord Bascom's mansion?"

"Very well, and what of it? Do you suppose I am leading you into a trap?"

"I will not suspect you, but——"

"But you think it is very strange to lead you to the premises of the man who is hunting you down?"

"That is the truth," answered O'Neill.

"Why, you block-head, that is the last place in the world your enemies will think of looking for you. This back building is fitted up as my gymnasium, and none ever enter here except with my permission. Tom Morley is in here now, I believe, as he was anxious about his brother when he saw the governor and the officers going to the lodging-house. Come on, and fear not."

Being thus appealed to, the three young men followed the mad creature into the hall of the dark building.

Polly soon procured a lantern, and then led the way up a broad staircase, which was covered with handsome carpet.

Entering a large, well-furnished room, she then cried aloud:

"Are you here, Tom?"

There was no answer to the question, but they could all see the form of a man reclining on a sofa as if asleep, and the young woman sprang forward, crying:

"The lazy rogue has fallen asleep while waiting for us. That is not like Tom. Arouse yourself, you rascal!"

The young woman shook the supposed sleeper for a moment, and she then sprang back with a horrified expression in her eyes, as she cried:

"Heavens alive! his hand is as cold as death! He is dead!"

Mort Morley sprang forward, and bent over his brother for a few moments, feeling his hands and breast in the most anxious manner, as he exclaimed:

"Gracious heavens! my dear brother is dead! Woman, this is your work, and you will suffer for it!"

As the young American uttered the threat he made a dart at the young woman, but she flung him aside with great violence, as she cried, in frenzied tones:

"Fool! fool! to think that I should slay the man I love to distraction, and my own husband as well. Oh, Tom! dear Tom! you are not dead! Open your eyes and speak to me!"

And the impulsive young creature flung herself on the cold body and sobbed over it as if her very heart would break.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO KILLED TOM MORLEY?

After a careful examination on the part of Justin O'Neill and Theo Falvey, they both came to the conclusion that Tom Morley was really dead, yet they could not perceive any outward signs of violence on his head or throat.

As young O'Neill was a medical student of some promise, he gave it as his opinion, from a certain odor pervading the place, that the young man had been poisoned.

Strange to say, the agitated young woman was the first to recover her presence of mind, and, flinging a cloak over the form of the man she loved, she beckoned the young men to follow her into another and smaller apartment, which was fitted up as a bedroom.

Pointing to some chairs, the young woman addressed Mort Morley in subdued tones, saying:

"I have said your brother was my husband, and that is the truth. We were married in Canada after he escaped from prison."

"It is all a mystery to me," said the young American, with a deep sigh. "Why did my brother never write to me?"

"For several reasons. In the first place, he was supposed

to have been executed, and my father knew that he was an outlawed rebel."

"May I ask you, young lady, if it could be possible that my brother was a secret agent of the British government?"

"That is out of the question. Your brother hated the British government as much as any man living."

"Then why did he visit the chief of police here?"

"He visited that official on private business, in which he and I were alone interested, except the man we were after. Now I have it."

The young woman sprang up excitedly and paced the floor for some moments ere she exclaimed:

"It must have been the villain we are after who poisoned poor Tom."

"May I ask you the name of that villain?" asked Mort Morley.

"No, no, you cannot ask me as yet. I must first find out that he is the guilty one, and then for vengeance on him."

"Did your father know that my brother had made you his wife?"

"Not he. He knew that I was partial to a certain Mr. Morehead, but he did not dream that the gentleman was the Canadian rebel."

The young American looked earnestly at the young woman as he said:

"You will excuse me, young lady, but could it be possible that your father was instrumental in the death of my poor brother?"

"Impossible! My father is not an assassin, if he is regarded as a tyrant by certain parties here."

The mad creature then turned her eyes on Justin O'Neill, as she continued:

"Perhaps you can enlighten us as to the murder, sir? What about the Invisible Twelve? Was not my husband in some trouble to-night?"

These were leading questions, and Justin was not prepared to answer them.

It was true that he had been thinking of the mysterious body in connection with the death of Tom Morley, but he could not bring himself to believe that the Invisible Twelve would thus remove an innocent man.

Hesitating to reply for a few moments, Justin then said:

"Young lady, you spoke to-night of a certain spy in our club. Do you know that spy?"

"I only know that my father got information of the existence of a secret band of patriots from some conversation which his spy overheard in the park one night."

"And you do not know that spy?"

"I do not, but I would soon find him out if I thought he had anything to do with the death of my husband."

"When my brother was in Canada was he disguised?" asked Mort Morley.

"Of course he was, or my father would have recognized him here. Hush! Did you not hear some one moving in the other room?"

As the young woman spoke she stole to the door of the apartment where the body was lying, and holding the lantern before her she peered in cautiously.

Then, starting back with a joyous exclamation, she cried:

"Dear Tom is not dead at all! He has left the sofa! Come in! Come in!"

The agitated young woman sprang into the large apartment, followed by her three companions, as she cried:

"Tom! Tom! Where are you?"

They all sprang toward the empty sofa, where the large clock was still lying, but the body had disappeared.

"Tom! Tom! Where are you?" cried the woman again, as she flashed the light of the lantern around the room.

But there was no response to her cries.

A joyous light then appeared in the young woman's eyes as she cried, in merry tones:

"Oh, you great rogue, you are playing tricks on us. Come out and show yourself at once, or I will box your ears."

Justin O'Neill noticed a peculiarly shaped envelope lying on the floor at the moment, and he hastened to pick it up, as he muttered to himself:

"It is a message from the Invisible Twelve. What can be the meaning of all this mystery?"

Taking the lantern from the young woman's hand, while she continued to address her unseen husband in playful tones, Justin proceeded to read the secret cipher contained in the envelope.

It was a message from the Invisible Twelve, and it contained the following strange order:

"If the lady with you would learn the fate of the man she loves, and who attempted to murder him to-night, she will be secret as to what happened and follow your guidance hereafter."

Having read the paper, which was signed by the peculiar mark known only to the initiated, Justin handed it to young Falvey without uttering a word.

The merry woman before them then noticed the paper, and she sprang forward as if to read it as she cried:

"What is that? What is the meaning of your serious faces? Where is Tom?"

Justin O'Neill took the young woman by the hand and drew her away from Falvey, as he replied:

"We hope that Tom Morley is alive, but we cannot say for certain at present. Try and have patience for awhile."

"Patience, indeed! Don't talk to me of patience. What has become of Tom? What is the meaning of that paper?"

As the young woman uttered the last sentence she made a dash for the secret document and tore it from Falvey's grasp.

Then holding the paper to the light she examined the characters written thereon for some moments, as she cried:

"What in the mischief is this? It is all Greek to me."

Justin O'Neill looked earnestly at his companions ere he replied:

"That is a secret message from some true friends of ours. Please read it for her."

Young Falvey read the secret message in low tones, and so that they could only be overheard by those close to him.

Justin O'Neill watched the effect on the excitable young woman, and then whispered into her ear:

"Before we say any more to you on this subject, it will be necessary for us to know that we cannot be overheard by any one."

"Then you are afraid we may be overheard in here?"

"I am, as I cannot account for the removal of our young friend, dead or alive."

"He must be alive, and he must have walked out of his own accord," said the young woman, "as he is the only person who could get in or out of here without my permission."

"He must be in this building yet, if he did not walk out," said Justin.

The young woman with the three friends then proceeded to search the building, which consisted of two stories only, with three large rooms on each floor.

There was a door leading to her father's mansion in front, as well as the one by which they had entered from the rear, both of which were secured by strong spring locks.

The windows of the rooms were all secured by shutters and strong iron bars, which gave the place the appearance of a comfortable prison, when viewed from the inside.

Boxing-gloves, fencing-foils, dumb-bells and various other articles for athletic practices were strewn around the apartments, while the bedroom was fitted up in a luxuriant manner.

After a thorough search, Mad Polly turned to Justin O'Neill with a smile, saying:

"I am now satisfied that my dear Tom is alive, and that he has left to go in search of you all, not knowing that we were in the bedroom at the time."

"But how do you account for his being in that death-like trance?" asked Justin O'Neill.

"I cannot account for it. Can you account for receiving that mysterious document?"

"I cannot. But I would sincerely advise you to keep secret on the subject, young lady, and follow the advice therein given."

"I will keep the secret, and I will follow the advice. You must not imagine, from what you have seen of me to-night, that I am a silly creature. I may be playing a part, but I can be sensible and serious when I please."

Believing in the sincerity of the young woman before them, the young men consented to remain there that night.

Having furnished them with cake, wine and collared meats, the young woman, who still retained her disguise, prepared to leave the building, saying:

"Rest here in peace while I go in search of my husband, as I cannot rest until I learn something about him."

Seeing that it was impossible to detain the warm-hearted young woman, except against her will, Justin O'Neill led her to the door in the lane, saying:

"For goodness' sake, do be careful, for your own sake, if not for that of your husband."

"I will! I will!" was the answer, as the active woman sprang out of the door, closing the spring-lock after her.

The three young men then sat down to partake of the refreshments, as well as to discuss the strange events of the night.

After receiving the cipher message, they all agreed that the Invisible Twelve had something to do with the disappearance of Tom Morley.

The young men did not drink more than three glasses of wine each, when Justin O'Neill put his hand to his head, as he said, in feeble, stuttering tones:

"I fear the wine is drugged, as I feel very queer indeed."

The words were scarcely uttered when the young student fell from his chair on the floor and became insensible.

In less than ten seconds after his two friends were lying beside him, and there did not appear to be a single throb of life in either of their bodies.

Justin O'Neill was the first to recover his senses again, when he found himself in a somewhat familiar apartment, which was but very dimly lighted.

On looking around and finding himself alone, the young student muttered aloud, saying:

"Is it possible that I am in the chamber of the Invisible Twelve again?"

As if in reply to his question, a trumpet voice rang out, saying:

"Brothers, you are required to give evidence again before the Invisible Twelve. You will answer the questions put to you."

The young student rubbed his eyes, and then looked around again ere he asked:

"May I know how long I have been in an insensible state?"

"Several hours," was the reply. "The day has passed since you were before us. You will now answer the questions put to you."

"I am ready," said Justin.

The trumpet voice then rang out as before, crying:

"It has become known to us that a spy has entered the band, who has been giving information to Lord Bascom. Can you give us any information on that point?"

Justin reflected a few moments, and he remembered the words of the young woman concerning the spy, when he answered:

"I heard that a spy was in Lord Bascom's employ, but I cannot tell you who he is."

"Who gave you that information?"

The young man hesitated to answer, as he did not feel disposed to betray the young woman who had befriended them.

It then occurred to Justin that they had been drugged by the young woman for some secret purpose of her own, and he replied:

"The person who gave the information was one whom you advised us to bring into the band."

"You allude to Lord Bascom's daughter?"

"I do."

"What did she say about the spy?"

"She said that he had heard some of our members talking in the park about a secret band, and that he had carried the secret to Lord Bascom."

"Who did he overhear?"

"I cannot tell."

There was silence for some moments, and then the trumpet voice rang out, crying:

"It is feared that you and your friend, Falvey, were overheard, or else why did they attempt to arrest you last night? You must be more careful in the future."

Justin bowed as if in response to the rebuke, and then the voice continued:

"It is true that a spy has crept into our ranks, but he will be discovered and dealt with before he can do any more mischief. Lord Bascom is after you especially, and it will be necessary that you disguise yourself for some time and keep in hiding during the day. The time has come for you to act against your cruel enemy. Are you prepared to carry out your part against him, as ordered by us?"

"I am," was the firm reply of the young student. "May I ask a question?"

"Yes."

"Then I would like to know if Lord Bascom's daughter is to be prosecuted?"

"She is not, if she is true to us. We do not war on the children of our enemies."

"Then I am prepared to open war on Lord Bascom in any manner you please."

"Then drink to the 'Wild Justice of Revenge,' and death to Ireland's foes!" cried the voice, as a masked figure appeared before the young student and handed him a goblet.

Justin drank on the instant, and he had scarcely swallowed the liquor presented to him when his head felt dizzy again, and he fell on the floor insensible.

When the agitated young man opened his eyes again he found himself in the position to which he had been conducted by Mad Polly, and young Falvey and Mort Morley were stretched beside him.

They were just recovering from a long sleep, and they were both rubbing their eyes as young Falvey growled forth:

"Confound that young woman, she has drugged us. What in the mischief can Mad Polly be up to?"

"I am here to answer that question," said a soft voice, as a beautiful young woman appeared before them.

The young men recognized the voice on the instant, but they started in surprise on beholding the owner, while Theodore Falvey exclaimed:

"Who in the mischief are you, young lady?"

"I am the person you just called Mad Polly, you saucy rogue!" said the charming young creature with a sweet but a sad smile. "What a long sleep you all had! Oh, poor Tom! poor Tom! I cannot find him at all. I fear he has been really murdered, or he would never desert me."

"I hope not," said Falvey, as he continued to stare at the bright creature in surprise. "Is it really true that you are the same young lady whom I have seen at the races?"

"Yes, yes, it is true. I looked like a fright then, because I was always disguised in public. But I will tell you the story hereafter. Oh, where can I find Tom? Is he alive or dead?"

Before any one could reply a strange voice was heard, crying:

"Join the band governed by the Invisible Twelve and you will learn, young lady."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF A ROMANTIC GIRL.

The three young men sprang from the floor on hearing the voice of the invisible speaker, who spoke with trumpet tones, while the young woman started and cried:

"Who are you that speaks, and where are you now? In mercy to me, whoever you are, tell me what has become of the young man who disappeared last night?"

There was no answer to the appeal.

The young woman listened very impatiently, and so did the others, when she raised her voice again, crying, as she sprang into the larger room:

"Confound me if I know what to make of this! If it is you playing tricks on me, Tom, I will never speak to you again."

The young men followed Mad Polly into the larger room, and they all looked around eagerly, as if in search of the unseen speaker, but no one appeared to them.

The young woman then became alarmed for her husband again, and she turned appealingly to Justin O'Neill, saying:

"Oh, sir, if you can explain the strange proceedings, do so, in mercy to me."

"Would that I could, young lady, but I assure you that I am as much puzzled as yourself, and perhaps more so."

The young student then thought of his last unaccountable visit to the chamber of the Invisible Twelve, and he asked himself:

"Is it possible that I have been dreaming, and that I did not leave here since we fell asleep?"

Then, turning to the young woman, he said:

"Young lady, do you know anything of the drugged wine you gave us?"

Mad Polly flushed up on the instant, and replied, in angry tones:

"I assure you, sir, that I did not give you any drugged wine. When I left you here last night I went in search of my husband. When I returned in the morning I found you all lying asleep on the floor, and as I could not rouse you, I supposed that you had taken too much of the wine."

"We only drank about three glasses each," said Justin, "when we all fell on the floor, insensible. I do not care to accuse you, but it was the wine you gave us that did the work."

The young woman looked around the bedroom as if in search of some of the wine which she had presented to them the night before, as she replied:

"Then it must have been drugged without my knowing it. What does all this mystery mean? What has become of my husband?"

"We cannot tell," answered Mort Morley, "You must

imagine that I am most interested in the fate of my brother. Now please tell us how long we have been lying here, and what you have been doing in looking for Tom?"

The young woman hesitated a few moments to reply, as if collecting her thoughts, and then answered, in calm tones:

"You have had a very long sleep of it indeed, gentlemen, as it is now night again. As to what I have been doing, it were better that I gave you a brief account of our acquaintance before showing you the position I am placed in."

"I am sure we will be very glad to hear it, if we only had something to eat and drink," said young Falvey, in pleasant tones, "as I am almost famished, for one."

"I have thought of that, gentlemen, and here is a supper ready for you, with wine that I am certain is not drugged. While you are eating I will give you a little of my remarkable experience, as I wish to gain your full confidence in the mysterious work that we may have before us. While you eat I will talk."

The three young men were soon hard at work on the good food placed before them, and they all ate and drank without entertaining the slightest suspicion of treachery on the part of the versatile young woman before them.

In truth, the more they all saw of her the more convinced they became that they could place full reliance in her honesty, notwithstanding the very suspicious circumstances of the previous night.

While the young men were thus eating the young woman addressed young Falvey in particular, saying, with a smile:

"You knew me as one of the most hideous around Dublin?"

"I wouldn't say that, but——"

"We'll have no buts about it, as it was the truth. As some of you may know, I received severe injuries by a fall from a horse when I was a young girl."

"I was wild enough at the time, goodness knows, but I had sense enough to understand and hate a man to whom my father had promised me in marriage, and I was determined to escape from the hated union at all hazards."

"When my father took me to Paris to consult physicians there about the hideous scars that appeared on my face, a romantic idea entered my mind, and it was this: If the scars could be cured, well and good; if not, no occasion for the plan."

"The scars were perfectly cured, but no one was the wiser except the eminent French physician who tended to me, and my confidential nurse. My father to this day believes me disfigured forever."

"You'll surmise the object I had in view. I wanted to disgust the man who insisted on the carrying out of a promise made by father when I was a small girl."

The romantic girl turned away for a few moments so that the young men could not see her face, and when she appeared before them again she was a perfect fright.

"You now see me, gentlemen, as I have appeared to all the world of late, except my dear husband and my faithful old nurse. I had some flesh-marks made in Paris, and this is one of them. The French physician and my nurse alone knew who intended to wear them."

"And did that face drive away the man that was after you?" asked young Falvey, with a sly smile.

"This face and my wild actions did. When I returned to Ireland, I soon acquired the name of Mad Polly from my furious freaks and capers. I succeeded in driving away the man that was after me, and I have been laughing at him ever since."

"Begorra," said Falvey, "he wouldn't laugh much if he knew the trick you had played on him. 'Tis the queerest joke I ever heard of in my life."

"And how did you become acquainted with Tom?" asked Mort Morley. "Did he know that you were such a good-looking girl when he was making love to you?"

"Of course he did. I made up my mind that whenever I met a man whom I could really like that I would appear to him in my natural face. As to when and how we met came about in this way: We were traveling in Canada when the Riel rebellion broke out, and my father denounced the rebels in the harshest manner. We were both taken prisoners, and some of Riel's half-savage followers were about to put us to death, when a brave young American saved us at a great risk of his own life. That young American was acting as a spy for Riel at the time, and he was thorough disguised, so that he could enter the English lines."

"That was just like my brother Tom," said young Morley, "as he was always clever with disguises from boyhood."

"Disguised or not," said the young woman, with a smile, "I fell in love with him, and I soon found an opportunity of showing him my real countenance."

"Then, of course, he fell in love with you at once," said Justin O'Neill.

"To be sure he did. Well, the poor fellow was taken prisoner, and they were going to hang him as a spy."

"Did your father not assist you in saving the man who saved your life?" asked Morley.

"Not he, as he hates rebels of every kind. My father to-day firmly believes that the man who rescued us was hanged in Canada, and he believes that Mr. Ferdinand Morehead is a young American gentleman of fortune."

"When and where were you married?" asked Mort Morley.

"We were married in New York City soon after his escaping from Canada."

"Can you tell me why my brother never looked me up?"

"He did look you up on the quiet, but he found that you had left New York City, and he did not know where to address you. Besides, it was a matter of life and death that he should not be known even here in Ireland."

"Young lady," said Justin O'Neill, in very serious tones, "can you tell us why your husband visited the chief of police here in Dublin?"

The young woman hesitated for a few moments, and then replied:

"That is a secret of mine and would injure us very much if such was known, but, as I fear Tom has got into trouble, and as I believe you to be friends of ours, I will tell you."

"Do not," said Justin O'Neill, "if it is a private affair."

"I prefer to tell you, as I know it will serve poor Tom if he is still alive. You must know that I am mistress of a large fortune, but my father can deprive me of it on certain conditions, which is unnecessary to state. That fortune would come into my possession in two weeks were it not for the loss of some important papers. Those papers were stolen from me, and I fear that my own father had a hand in the transaction."

"Then I presume," said Justin O'Neill, "that it was in looking for those papers that your husband visited the chief of police here?"

"You are correct, sir. As Tom was a stranger in Dublin, he could not set about in the aid of the work very well, except with the help of a detective. It was to procure aid in that way that he went to the office of the chief of police."

"If your father was the means of stealing those documents," said Justin O'Neill, "would he not have destroyed them ere now?"

"He would not, for the reason that they are just as important to him as they are to me. To explain that I would have to go into a private family history that you would not care to hear."

"It is believed, young lady," continued Justin, "that you do not agree with your father in national affairs."

"Indeed I do not. I am a thorough Irish woman, and I

baffle my father whenever I can, through the means of certain family secrets which I hold. I know that my father is hated by the Irish patriots, but he has been very kind to me in the main, and I could never become his enemy, except I was certain he made away with my husband."

And then, as if inspired by a sudden idea, the young woman exclaimed:

"Good gracious! what if my father has made away with Tom, after all? What if he should discover that he is my husband?"

The anxious young woman then placed her hand on her throbbing forehead as if lost in deep reflection for some moments, while the young men watched her with deep attention as they exchanged meaning glances among themselves.

Lowering her voice to a whisper, the young woman then drew Justin O'Neill toward her, saying:

"I am certain that my husband has been made away with by my father and his agents, or else by this secret band of patriots called the Invisible Twelve. Something important occurs to me now."

"Pray, what is it, young lady?"

"Two days ago my father requested me to give up this building, which I have used as a gymnasium, and where I have been enabled to meet my husband in secret. I refused, and a dark frown passed over his face. I felt that he had been watching me, or having me watched closely ever since. Oh, if I was sure that he had anything to do with the making away of my husband, I would forget that I am his child and avenge——"

The excited young woman had raised her voice while uttering the last exclamation, and before she could proceed further the trumpet voice fell on their ears, crying:

"Join the Invisible Twelve and you will know the truth."

The startled young woman was about to reply, when the door leading toward the front mansion was flung open with a bang and heavy footsteps were heard on the stairs.

The three young men sprang to their feet and placed their hands involuntarily on their pockets where they kept their revolvers.

The weapons were gone, as they had been taken from them while in the deep slumber.

The young woman had just presence of mind enough to put her hands on her face to note that the ugly flesh mask was properly adjusted when her father burst into the room, followed by half a dozen men, all wearing masks.

Striding up to the somewhat startled group, Lord Bascom exclaimed, in excited and angry tones:

"And so this is the use your gymnasium is put to, entertaining a lot of rascally rebels."

One glance at her father's eyes told Mad Polly that her father was prepared for and even sought a violent quarrel with her, and she suspected the cause of it.

Hitherto he had treated her with marked indulgence, even when she was caught in far wilder scrapes than entertaining a few young men, and she said to herself:

"He wants an open rupture, so that he may put me in a madhouse. He seeks the quarrel, and the consequences be on his own head."

Then, raising her voice to the loudest pitch and grinning fearfully at the same time, the young woman cried, as if in surprise:

"Why, governor, what is the trouble with you now? Is it a crime for me to entertain a few young gentlemen in my gymnasium?"

"It is when these young gentlemen are rascally rebels who are hiding from justice. Advance and seize the dogs, men!"

"Stand back there, men! Father, is it your purpose to treat me with disrespect?"

"It is my purpose to teach you how to behave yourself hereafter. Advance, I say, and seize the rascals!"

The masked men were about to rush on the young fellows, when the lamps were suddenly put out and then a trumpet voice exclaimed, as if coming from the stairway:

"Rush to the rescue of your friends, dear boys. Do not injure the young lady, but down with the tyrants!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE INVISIBLE TWELVE AT SERIOUS WORK.

Justin O'Neill was not of a suspicious nature, but when Lord Bascom and his men appeared he felt convinced that the young woman had been playing them false all the time.

That opinion altered a little, however, when he perceived the bold stand she took against her father, and beheld a light of anger flashing from her eyes.

The young student was about to call on his friends to make a bold dash for liberty, when the trumpet voice rang on their ears, and then Justin felt that succor was at hand, through the means of the Invisible Twelve.

Then there was a rush of feet, the sounds of blows and of bodies falling on the floor, while high above the tumult rang out the trumpet voice, crying:

"Rescue your friends and down with your foes! Bring the young lady and her father with you!"

Then Lord Bascom would yell for aid while he struck about in the dark, little caring whether he hit friend or foe, so long as he would be able to reach the doorway leading out to his mansion.

Mad Polly drew back to the side of the young men when the rush was made, and she seized Justin O'Neill by the arm, as she said:

"For goodness' sake, do not let them slay my father, bad as he is!"

The noise of the struggle in the dark soon subsided, the young men keeping together in the meantime, being somewhat bewildered as to how they should act in the unlooked-for struggle.

Not hearing her father's voice raised aloud when the struggle was evidently over, Mad Polly cried to the young men:

"Oh, mercy! mercy! Have they killed my father?"

As neither of the young men could answer, they remained silent, listening intently all the while.

The young woman listened also.

They could all hear the shuffling of feet, the retreat of the footsteps down the stairs, and the muttered directions given by the leader as if for the treatment of the prisoners.

And then all was as silent as death.

Still standing near the young men, Mad Polly cried out, in earnest tones:

"Oh, this suspense is horrible. Will not some one light a lamp and see what has happened?"

Agitated as the young woman was, she never alluded to her husband, although she felt very well assured that that secret was exploded, so far as her father was concerned.

Justin O'Neill soon succeeded in lighting a lamp, and they all then glanced around the apartment in surprise.

Not one of their late visitors, whether friends or foes, appeared in either of the rooms.

Some overturned tables and chairs, a torn mask or two, and a few ugly clubs were the only evidences that appeared of the late struggle.

The young woman was about to rush down the stairs in search of her father, when the trumpet voice rang out again, crying:

"Do not stir just yet, young lady, and all will be well for you."

"Oh, in mercy, tell me of my father?"

"You should not bear any love for the cruel man whom you call father, but you will hear of him, and of one who is far dearer to you, if you follow Justin O'Neill's advice to-night," replied the trumpet voice, as if coming from the hall below.

The young woman then turned to Justin as if for information, and the voice continued:

"You will all four disguise yourselves in costumes which you will find in the lower rooms, and then leave this place as fast as possible. Young lady, be silent and you will learn the fate of your friends. Follow Justin O'Neill to-night. No more at present from the Invisible Twelve."

Being all amazed at the startling proceedings, as well as the sudden disappearance of their friends and enemies, neither the young men nor the young woman uttered a word for some moments.

The brave O'Neill was the first to break silence, as he turned to the young woman, saying:

"If you fear your father hereafter I would advise you to follow the advice just given."

Then lowering his voice to a whisper, he said:

"I will confess to you, young lady, that I do belong to a patriot band, governed by a body known as the Invisible Twelve. It is evident that they wish you to appear before them."

"Then I will appear," promptly answered Mad Polly, in cautious tones. "Let us hasten away from here, or some of father's friends may come here to intercept us."

All four then hastened down to one of the lower rooms, where they found an assortment of male attire, such as may be worn by mechanics and laborers, and also some wigs and false beards.

Mad Polly selected one of the suits and hastened up into a bedroom to don the disguise, while she muttered to herself:

"If father has found out the secret of my marriage, it will be war to the knife between us, indeed. What has become of Tom? What is the meaning of their wanting me before their secret body?"

In the meantime, Justin O'Neill found a message directed to him in cipher, which read as follows:

"You will appear before the Invisible to-night, bringing a new recruit with you. The cab will be in waiting at the appointed place at the usual hour."

After another hasty consultation between the four friends, it was agreed that O'Neill and Mad Polly should keep together until the appointed time, while the others went in a different direction.

They then left the building by the deserted alleyway, and Justin and the young woman proceeded to a tavern not far distant.

The young student was thoroughly mystified over the proceedings of the past few days and nights, and he asked himself, as he looked back at the gymnasium:

"Can it be possible that there is a secret passage leading from there to the trial hall?"

Curbing his impatience, however, Justin O'Neill endeavored to assure his companion that her husband was still in the land of the living, and that it was not yet certain that her father had discovered the secret marriage.

Under these assurances the lively young woman recovered her usual gaiety, and chatted away on the topics and incidents that puzzled them.

They spoke in whispers, however, and avoided police officers as much as possible.

Justin then became convinced, that while the young woman had hitherto regarded her cruel old father with some love, she was fully prepared to go against him if he had injured her husband.

At the appointed hour the young man and lively woman appeared at the spot where the cab was in waiting for them.

Then Mad Polly went through the whole program as experienced by the young student on a former occasion, until she was led blindfolded into a square apartment.

The bandage on her eyes was then removed, a dark mask was placed on her face and, when the dim light appeared, she found herself seated in the middle of the apartment and a trumpet voice was heard, crying:

"Young person, if you wish to learn the fate of those you love most do not open your lips except when you are spoken to."

The young woman bowed in acknowledgment, and then the voice was heard again, saying:

"Do you claim to be a true daughter of Erin?"

"I do," answered Polly.

"Are you prepared to struggle in the freedom of our land, even so far as contending against him who has claimed you as his daughter?"

The young woman hesitated to reply, when the voice again was heard, saying:

"If it should be proved to you that Lord Bascom is not your father, and that he has robbed you and otherwise injured you in the most selfish manner, would you then contend against him?"

"I would."

"Would you take his life with your own hand if it was also proved that he killed the man you loved best?"

"That, I would," was the prompt response, given in fierce tones.

All was darkness again, and Polly did not hear a sound for some time.

After some minutes, and it seemed an age to the impatient and anxious woman, one side of the square apartment was lowered and a raised stage appeared above.

On that raised stage a dungeon scene was represented, and then a chained prisoner appeared lying on the floor.

Polly could not restrain a cry on perceiving the prisoner, as it was her own well-beloved young husband who appeared to be lying there in death.

Suppressing her emotions, and hoping that the scene before her was but the part of a mimic play, the brave young woman awaited developments in silence.

Rising as if in a dream and shaking the irons on him, the young man in the dungeon arose, and muttered aloud:

"How in the mischief did I get here, and what is the meaning of this scene? Ah! I remember now, Lord Bascom, the old villain, led me into a trap and he then swore he would let me rot in a dungeon for having married his daughter."

As the young man was speaking the light on the stage grew dimmer and dimmer, until it was perfectly dark, and then the side of the room closed again.

The half-frantic Polly raised her hands in supplication and attempted to call out, when she found that there was a gag attached to the mask on her face, and she was powerless to address the man she loved so well.

Another deep silence followed.

Polly then found a hand gliding over her face, as if to remove the mask or the gag, while a voice whispered into her ear:

"Be brave and obey the Invisible Twelve. Your father has learned the secret of your marriage, and it was he who abducted your young husband."

"I will," whispered Polly, in reply.

The young woman then heard soft footsteps stealing away from her.

The dim light appeared soon after and, to Polly's surprise, she found herself surrounded by the twelve figures, who were completely shrouded in a light, gauzy substance, each holding a trumpet in its right hand.

Thoroughly bewildered by the strange apparitions around her, she could only stare at them until she was addressed by one of the trumpets, saying:

"Young person, if you wish to rescue the man you love and struggle against the cruel man who pretends to be your father, you will join the secret band governed by the Invisible Twelve. Will you take the oath this night?"

Being fearfully agitated by the scene she had witnessed, as well as being incensed against the man she had looked upon as her father, the brave young woman readily responded:

"I will join you without any hesitation, providing you prove to me that your statements are true."

"Did you not see and hear your husband?" asked the voice.

The ready-witted girl remembered Mort Merley, and she answered:

"It may have been his twin brother. Prove to me that my husband is in a horrible dungeon as that appeared to be, and that my father is the cruel wretch you state he is, and I will slay him with my own hand!"

"That is enough at present," cried the Invisible. "We will prove it. Adjourn!"

The lights went out on the instant, and Polly found herself sitting in the dark apartment.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN WITH MANY FACES.

It was night, and Lord Bascom was seated in his private library with his head resting on his breast, as if lost in deep meditation.

Matters were not going on well with the cruel man who would tyrannize over his fellow-beings, and who believed in treating the Irish patriots in the same manner as King George treated the people of America before the Revolution.

While thus lost in meditation a slight knock was heard, and the tyrant started, as he cried:

"Come in!"

The door opened on the instant and a man entered, with a broad smile on his face, as he said:

"I am punctual, my lord."

"I see you are, Parson. Be seated, and let us to business. What good news have you to-night? Any word of that confounded girl?"

And the anxious lord glared eagerly at his visitor.

"I have no account of the girl as yet, my lord, but I hope to have. But I have other news of importance."

"What is it? Is it about this new band of rebels?"

"Yes, sir; about the Invisible Twelve."

Lord Bascom brightened up on the instant and rubbed his hands with evident satisfaction as he asked:

"Well, have you managed to get into the inner ring yet, you clever rascal?"

"Not yet, my lord, but I hope to very soon. It is a very difficult job, I can tell you."

"Nonsense, man! You are only trying to raise your price. Once in the order it should be an easy matter for a clever man like you to ferret out the whole business on the double-quick."

"I assure you that it is not, my lord, as you would know full well if you had my experience."

"Well, well," said Lord Bascom, impatiently, "let us hear what you have really found out."

Thus appealed to, the spy commenced:

"You know that the first information I got was from the two young students in the park that night. In less than a week after I was before the Invisible Twelve as a candidate for admission. All I could then learn was that it was a powerful organization, and that the son of your old enemy was a member."

"That wasn't much," interrupted Lord Bascom. "You can't tell where the meeting-place is, or give me the names of any of the Invisible Twelve."

"That is true, my lord, but I am compelled to move very slowly. If I were to try and rush things, suspicion would be at once aroused."

"Pshaw! they'll never suspect you. Have you not been already imprisoned as a patriot? and are you not hand-and-glove with all the leading rebels?"

"That is very true, sir, or I would not have been introduced to this order. If it were once suspected that I am a detective from Scotland Yard my body would soon be floating in the Liffey."

"Who is to suspect it? You can never be recognized while you keep up your different characters as well as you do. On my honor, I did not know you when you were arrested at the royal meeting the other night, you clever rogue."

And Lord Bascom laughed heartily as he clapped the detective on the shoulder in an approving manner.

"You flatter me too much, my lord," said Parson, with a grin. "It is true that I can wear many faces, but I can tell you that I have now to deal with men who are not to be easily hoodwinked. So far I have gained very little information, but I hope to bag them all ere long."

"Were you not asked to the place of meeting after the first night?"

"I was not, my lord."

"That is very strange."

"It is one of their rules, sir, as I understand, that new members are not to attend the meetings until they are notified by an order from the Invisible Twelve."

"I see. Then all you really found out as yet is that Justin O'Neill and Theodore Falvey belong to the band?"

"That is about all, but I strongly suspect that the young American also belongs to the order."

"You mean Morley?"

"Yes, sir. Now, if you please, we will speak about Lady Mary."

"Yes, confound her! She is giving me a great deal of annoyance," said Lord Bascom, with a deep frown. "There is no doubt that she is the wife of that other blasted American."

"Not the slightest, my lord. They were married in New York. It was while watching her that I detected the young men in the gymnasium last night. I wish to speak about that affair."

"Then I hope you can throw some new light on it, Parson, as it is a perfect mystery to me."

"I hope to, my lord. Now please let me ask you a few questions."

"Go ahead, and welcome."

"You said that you were in the act of arresting the three young men in the gymnasium when you were attacked and overpowered by a party of masked men who dashed up the stairs?"

"That is the truth. For my part, I fought as well as I could

in the dark until I got a blow that knocked me senseless. Oh, wouldn't I like to have the rascals in my power!"

"And we will, my lord. After that you found yourself in the cellar of the gymnasium, you told me, and your men were all with you?"

"That is the solemn truth. All the officers were bound and gagged when I came to my senses, and none of them could tell how we got down there."

The detective looked around the room for a moment or so, and then went to the door and looked out, as he remarked:

"We can't be too careful, my lord, as I fear you have spies in your own household. Now, let me whisper to you."

Having closed the door again, the spy placed his mouth to Lord Bascom's ear and whispered:

"I believe all the officers with you last night are members of this secret society governed by the Invisible Twelve."

"Impossible, Parson!"

"It is not impossible, sir. Now, let me ask you if either of them received a bad hurt in the scuffle in the dark?"

"They did not, I must confess."

"But you received a blow that stunned you for the time?"

"Yes, they did give me a severe crack, confound them."

"Well, don't you see, the officers were simply overpowered in the dark, as it were, but they were not injured. The fight was a farce all through."

"Confound it all, when I come to think of it, I believe you are right, Parson. The rascals didn't receive a scratch, although the fight lasted some time. Oh, if I were sure they are traitors, wouldn't I punish them in short order!"

"We'll give it to them in good time, my lord, but at present it will be well to let them imagine that you do not suspect them at all. Now about this young fellow in prison."

"You mean the scamp who had the impudence to marry my daughter?"

"I mean the young fellow who married the young lady you call your daughter, sir, if you please. In dealing with a confidential detective it is just as well to be as plain as you would be with your lawyer."

Lord Bascom glared angrily at the fellow for a moment, and then smiled bitterly on him as he said:

"You are a clever scoundrel, to find out all my secrets. Well, go on with what you were saying."

"Yes, my lord, it is my business to discover family secrets, and I have discovered that Lady Mary is not your daughter at all. She is your niece."

"Well, confound you, have I not agreed to pay you well for keeping my secret?"

"That is true, sir, and I am satisfied with the bargain, but I want you to understand that I cannot work in the dark. Now, as to her husband. It would be well to have him released at once."

"What! After all the trouble we had in arresting him?"

"Don't you want to get the young woman in your power again?"

"Of course I do. I mean to clap her in a private lunatic asylum."

"Well, it will be hard to catch her while her husband is in prison, and if you let him go we will soon get her."

"I think I understand you now, you cunning rascal."

"Don't flatter me too much, my lord, or I will be clamoring more from you. If this young American is released his wife will be certain to go to him, and then we can take her and get him out of the way."

"You will undertake that? How will you get rid of him?"

"By having him put to death as a traitor by the Invisible Twelve."

"Can you do it?"

"I can and I will. He is already suspected on account of his

visits to the chief of police, which I took good care to have reported."

Lord Bascom frowned in an ominous manner as he said:

"Hang the young rascal, he deserves death for interfering with my plans. See here, Parson. If you succeed in all you propose your fortune is assured."

"I will succeed, my lord. But I have not yet told you what I expect if I accomplish all I promise."

"What do you expect, you rascal?"

"Let me first state what I expect to do, and then I will tell you."

"Go on, and be quick, as I expect a young niece of mine from Galway at any moment. Confound her, I wish she had stayed at home at present."

"To whom do you allude, my lord?"

"A daughter of my sister in Galway is coming here to see me to-night, to spend a week or so with me. I received a telegraph dispatch from her this afternoon. She was then out in Athlone, but she said she would be here to-night—the nuisance; but you go on while we have time."

"Well, my lord, you know that I have been the means of rendering you some important favors, not the least of which was the purloining of important papers belonging to Lady Mary."

"Well, confound you, have I not settled with you for that business?"

"Very true, my lord, but I am still engaged for you on very important and very dangerous work."

"Come, come, Parson, don't exaggerate your services. Hunting down a gang of rebels is nothing to a clever rogue like you."

"I tell you, my lord, that death stares me in the face every hour I live, but do not imagine that I quail at all. I only want to have a strict understanding with you as to my reward."

"Well, well, what do you want?"

"I want to show you what you want first, my lord."

"Well, well, go on."

"In the first place, you want me to get Lady Mary in a private lunatic asylum, and get her husband out of the way?"

"That is the game. Go on."

"Then you want me to crush a certain young man named Justin O'Neill, so that he can never trouble you."

"That is true. I hated his father, and I hate him. You must get him out of the way forever."

"I will do it, sir, but I must have my own way about it. It was a mistake to attempt his arrest the other night."

"Well, admitting it was. Go on with the full catalogue."

"Last of all, you want me to expose and destroy the secret organization governed by the Invisible Twelve?"

"That I do—above all. I have reason to know that the rebel scoundrels have sworn to destroy me, and I only wonder that they have not attempted to assassinate me before this."

"Perhaps they are waiting to punish you in another way, my lord," suggested the spy, with a sly grin. "However, it is enough for me to know that you wish to crush them, and I am going to do it. Now, for my reward, in case I should succeed, as I will, in all my endeavors."

"What do you want? Speak out at once, and no beating about the bush."

The spy grinned again, as he replied, in blunt tones:

"I never beat about the bush in dealing with a gentleman like you. I want the hand of Lady Mary in marriage and half her fortune as well."

If the fellow had given Lord Bascom a blow in the face at the moment that person could not have been more surprised.

He was fairly dumb with amazement, and he kept staring at the detective, who kept grinning away, as he continued:

"I see you are a little surprised, my lord, that a handsome

fellow like me should take a notion to such a fright as Lady Mary. But you must know that every eye forms its own beauty, and——"

"But she has a husband," gasped forth Lord Bascom, finding words to express himself at length.

"Yes, but I propose to get rid of that husband very soon. Is it a bargain or not, my lord? Lady Mary and half her fortune for me, and I will guarantee to rid you of all your enemies. The man with many faces never yet failed in any enterprise he undertook, and he will not fail now. What say you?"

"It is a bargain," answered Lord Bascom, as he seized the rascal's hand and shook it in a warm manner. "If you do all you say you shall have Lady Mary and half her fortune."

Before the two men could utter another word the door was flung open and a servant announced:

"Miss Matilda Bodkin, from Galway."

CHAPTER XI.

THE YOUNG LADY FROM GALWAY.

No fairer vision ever appeared to mortal view than the young creature who thus appeared before Lord Bascom and the detective with many faces.

After greeting her in a friendly manner, Lord Bascom looked earnestly at the young woman, as he remarked, with a sigh:

"How like my dear sister you are. My own wayward girl would be like you now were it not for that unfortunate accident. Be seated, my dear. This is Mr. Parson, a friend of mine from London."

The young girl from Galway bowed to the detective as she remarked:

"By the way, where is my Cousin Polly?"

Lord Bascom sighed heavily as he replied, in sad tones:

"I am sorry to inform you that my unfortunate daughter is not well at present, and I have been compelled to send her to an asylum for a time."

"How sad that must be!" said the young girl. "I did hear that Lady Mary was a little touched, but I did not dream that it was as bad as that. They say at home that I am a little wild."

And the young creature chuckled to herself as she cast a charming glance at the detective.

Then Isaac Parson sighed and cast an admiring glance at the beautiful young creature, as he said to himself:

"It is a pity that Lady Mary is not as handsome. Ah, me, this is an enchanting creature, indeed! Hang me if I don't make love to her anyhow!"

The detective was a handsome young man of thirty when he appeared in his proper form, as he did at present, and he could be very agreeable and entertaining when it suited his purpose.

He then set himself out to please the young lady from Galway, and he flattered himself that he succeeded in making more than a pleasant impression on her when he arose to take his departure.

As the rascal reached the street he turned to look back at the mansion, as he said to himself:

"Hang me, if I don't go in for that young girl, as she is just my thing. I can bleed the old fool enough without marrying Lady Mary, and I'll work him and go in for the beauty from Galway."

When the detective left the house Matilda Bodkin drew her chair toward Lord Bascom, and her whole manner changed at once, as she said, in the most abrupt tones:

"Lord Bascom, I want to have a serious talk with you."

The man was somewhat surprised at the words and manner of the young girl, but he answered, in pleasant tones:

"Well, my dear, what have you to say to me?"

"I saw Lady Mary this evening, and I am in her confidence."

"The mischief you say! Where did you meet her?"

"That I cannot tell until we have had a thorough understanding, sir. I am here now as her agent."

Lord Bascom looked at the beautiful girl with uneasy eyes, and he was visibly agitated as he remarked:

"You surprise me very much indeed. What does the mad girl propose?"

"Lady Mary is not mad, sir, but she is very angry with you, as she has a right to be, I think. She is now aware that you are not her father."

"Confound it all, who told her that silly story?"

"No matter who told her, sir, but she is aware of the truth. She also knows that you have been using a portion of her fortune for years past, and she is determined to have her rights."

Lord Bascom glared at the young girl for a few moments, and his face was purple with passion as he asked:

"Did she send you here to defy me, young lady?"

"She sent me here to warn you that she intends to have justice. She also asserts that you have imprisoned her young husband without just cause, and she asks for his instant release."

"And if I don't see fit to grant it, what then?"

"Then she will proceed against you as fast as possible. She is anxious to spare you, if possible, but she is determined that you must act in a just and a lawful manner."

Lord Bascom sprang from his chair and flung it on the floor at the same time, as he cried, in a fearful rage:

"You can tell her to go to the mischief, for me, and to do her worst. Is there anything else she requires of me, young lady?"

The question was asked in sarcastic tones, as the excited man paced the floor.

"Yes, sir, there is," was the young lady's calm response, "but as I see you are excited, perhaps I had better defer the proposal until——"

"No, no! Go on. I am not excited, but I am indignant. Do you believe all you have heard from the mad girl?"

"Every word, sir. I am convinced that Lady Mary could not utter a falsehood even to save her own life."

"Then you are prepared to act with her and for her?"

"I am, sir."

"What else does she propose?"

"Lady Mary proposes that you release her young husband at once; that you will give her up the fortune left to her by her father, and that you will cease to prosecute those who are struggling for the redemption of their native land. That is all she requires."

"That is all she requires, indeed!" thundered the angry tyrant, as he glared down at the young girl, who was still as calm as if engaged in the most common-place business of life.

"And if I refuse, what then?"

"Lady Mary desired me to inform you that, in case of your refusal, she will be compelled to act against you, and with those who have sworn to crush you to the earth. You may imagine, she said, to whom she alludes."

"I do, I do. The wretched girl alludes to this new band of rebels governed by the Invisible Twelve. She has chosen, through the rascal she calls her husband, to ally herself with a band of assassins, but she must not imagine that I fear them. On the contrary, I defy her and them, and you can tell her so for me. The wretches!"

And the angry man stamped on the floor as if to intimate that he would crush his unseen foes beneath his foot.

The young lady arose from the chair and moved toward the door, as she remarked, in the same calm tones:

"Well, Lord Bascom, as this is your answer, I have nothing more to say. It only remains for me to warn you that you will now have to deal with those who will not show you much mercy."

The young woman was about to retire from the room, when Lord Bascom sprang at her and seized her by the shoulders, as he exclaimed:

"I don't believe you are my niece at all, but an agent of this infernal band governed by the Invisible Twelve, and I arrest you in the name of the law. Help, there—help!"

The angry man dragged the young girl toward a bell-rope as he spoke, and pulled at it in a furious manner as he kept glaring at her.

Hurried footsteps were soon heard in the halls, and then four policemen rushed into the room.

"Arrest this young person!" cried the excited man, as he flung the girl toward the officers. "See that she does not escape, while I make out a warrant."

The young woman was still as calm as possible, and when one of the officers laid his hand on her shoulder she only smiled at him as she remarked:

"Do not fear that I will run away, officer. Lord Bascom, you will regret this outrage on the daughter of your sister!"

"You are an impostor, and no relation of mine!" cried the excited man. "What do you want here, sir?"

A man dressed in the height of fashion, and wearing a full red beard and eyeglasses, entered the library at the moment, and it was to him that the last sentence was addressed:

Advancing to Lord Bascom, with a polite bow, the newcomer said:

"Excuse me, Lord Bascom, but I have an important message for you from the castle. You will understand."

The stranger gave a sign that was not perceived by any save Lord Bascom, and that nobleman drew him into a corner of the room on the instant, as he asked, in whispered tones:

"What is it, Parson?"

"My name is Darling now. Dismiss the officers at once, but let the young lady remain. I have very important news for you. Calm yourself, sir."

Lord Bascom then turned to the officers, saying:

"You can retire for the present and leave that young person with us."

The young girl took a chair in the coolest manner possible as the officers retired from the room, while the detective drew Lord Bascom into an ante-room, as he whispered to him:

"You are in great danger at the present moment, sir."

"How is that? Have I not ample protection at hand?"

"Protection of the officers will not avail you, as you are surrounded by desperate spies. The agents of the Invisible Twelve surround the house."

"Then I will summon more aid at once."

"No, no! Take my advice, act in a calm manner and we will defeat them. Do you know who that young lady is?"

"She says she is my niece, but——"

"She is your niece. Lord Bascom, do not start, but that young lady is really Lady Mary herself!"

"You are mad, Parson!"

"Hush! My name is Darling, and you must thus introduce me to her. I assure you that she is the young lady whom you called your daughter, and she is now in league with the Invisible Twelve, as I will soon prove, if you will let me have my way with her."

"It is simply ridiculous. Why, Lady Mary is as ugly as——"

"That young lady is beautiful. Still, I am telling you the

truth, as I will soon prove, if you let me deal with her. Will you do it, sir?"

"Certainly, but I know you are mad to think of such a thing."

"We will see about that, sir. Introduce me as Mr. Darling, a gentleman connected with the government."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DETECTIVE IN FULL PLAY.

Lord Bascom was fearfully agitated at the suggestion that the young person who pretended to be his niece from Galway was no other than the mad, wayward creature who had passed for his daughter since her childhood.

Glancing out at the beautiful young woman, he turned to the keen detective as he said, in subdued and peevish tones:

"I'll bet that you must be mad to think of such a thing. It would be a miracle if she could be thus transformed since last night, Parson."

"Try to call me Darling, if you please, my lord. Yes, it is a sort of a miracle, I admit, but I have very good reason to believe that I am not at all mistaken. That young person out there is no other than Lady Mary herself."

"How will you prove it?"

"Leave that to me. All I ask is a formal introduction to her, and the rest will follow in proper order."

Lord Bascom hesitated, as he was a little bewildered as to how he should act in the crisis before him.

The fact that the agents of the mysterious Invisible Twelve surrounded the house served to add to his embarrassment, although he was not a coward by any manner of means.

On perceiving that Parsons was so certain of his game the perplexed man took him by the arm and led him out to the library, where he presented him to the young lady from Galway in due form as "Mr. Darling, a gentleman connected with the English government."

The young lady received the introduction in a playful manner, saying:

"I am a rebel, and I hate all English officials in Ireland."

"I hope you will make an exception to the rule in my case, Miss Bodkin, as I assure you that I am in favor of Home Rule, if I dare to oppose Lord Bascom here for the time."

Lord Bascom frowned at the assertion, and the detective kept on:

"I learn, Miss Bodkin, that you have incurred my lord's suspicions, and that he accuses you of being an agent of a certain treasonable society."

The young woman laughed in a pleasant but defiant manner ere she replied:

"Yes, my very wise uncle has seen fit to declare that I am an impostor and a spy as well, because I came here to tell him some unwelcome truths, sir; but it is a family affair, and——"

"You would say," interrupted the spy, "that it is no affair of mine. That is where you are mistaken, young lady. As I am Lord Bascom's personal friend, as well as his associate under the sanction of the government, I do not see why I should not interpose my advice. Are you really what you pretend to be?"

The young lady stared at the impudent fellow in a very indignant manner ere she replied:

"You are insolent, sir, and I decline to say any more to you."

"Then you will be very foolish, if it were only for the sake of one in whom you take the greatest interest."

As the detective spoke the meaning words he gave the young woman a glance that was very expressive, indeed.

The young woman lowered her tone a little, as she asked:

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Simply this, young lady. I know you, and I know one in

whom you are deeply interested also. If you will cut me, you will place your friend in great danger. Please allow me to say a few words into your private ear."

Giving a signal to Lord Bascom, the latter withdrew into the ante-room.

The spy then approached the puzzled young lady, and speaking to her in whispered tones, he said:

"I allude to the young man who is your husband, Lady Mary."

The young woman started in surprise, and her eyes glared on him in an angry way as she responded:

"You are altogether mistaken, sir, as I am not married."

"Very well, young lady. You will please to remember that I warned you, however. I have good reason to know that you are married, and I also know your young husband's real name."

The young woman started again, and her face grew pale as she asked:

"Give me the name, but say it in a whisper, for goodness' sake!"

"Thomas Morley, who is a fugitive under sentence of death," was the low and solemn reply. "If you defy me, I will have him sent back to Canada for execution right off. Ha! ha! I now see that the mask is off your face at last."

The mask was torn from the young woman's face and that fair countenance was piteous to behold, while its owner staggered as if she would fall in a swoon.

Springing to her assistance on the instant, the cunning detective clasped her around the waist as he whispered into her ear in earnest tones:

"Fear not for him, if you will but trust to me. Lord Bascom has not heard a word, and I will keep him in profound ignorance if you will place yourself under my protection."

The young woman rallied on the instant and withdrew herself from the spy's embrace as she answered:

"I will trust you, whoever you are, but woe to you if you betray me! Have you told Lord Bascom who I am?"

"I gave him an intimation, but he did not believe me. I can easily deny my former assertion now if we can come to terms. Will you make a solemn compact with me, young lady?"

The young woman hesitated to answer, as she felt a peculiar dislike for the mysterious man who had thus thrust himself upon her.

Yet she felt that it was necessary to conciliate the fellow for a time.

She was now aware that her young husband was in a strong prison, where he had been sent by Lord Bascom, and if it were known that he was the condemned Canadian spy his fate would be sealed.

Under the protection of the agents of the Invisible Twelve he may be able to defy Lord Bascom and the man before her on her own account, but could she thus save the man she loved?

She feared that she could not, and she therefore answered:

"I will confide in you, sir, if you will keep my secret. May I ask who you are?"

"I am an agent of the Invisible Twelve and I am here as a spy on your uncle; but do not mention the fact or you are lost, and so is your husband. Place yourself in my hands and all will be well."

"But how will you deal with me before Lord Bascom if he suspects who I really am?"

"You will soon see. He is most anxious to seize you and place you in a madhouse, but I will baffle him. Don't contradict me now, but pretend to be very much affected at the exposure I will make."

The young woman pretended to agree to the proposal, and

the spy called Lord Bascom back into the library, saying, with a merry laugh:

"My lord, you will excuse me for the ridiculous suspicion I put forth. This young person is not your niece, but she proves to be an old acquaintance of mine in disguise."

The young woman covered her face with her hands, and pretended to sob bitterly, while Lord Bascom stared at her and at the spy, as he asked, in perplexed tones:

"Confound it all! what will happen next? Who and what is this young person, sir?"

"She happens to be a very clever actress with whom I became acquainted in London, my lord, and who is at present acting in the interest of Lady Mary, who was clever enough to impose on her with a silly story, and induce her to come here in the character of your niece from Galway."

"Then, why in the furies did you assert that she was Lady Mary herself?"

"I made the ridiculous assertion because I could not place her at first, and there was something in her voice that reminded me of Lady Mary, my lord."

"It was ridiculous! Young woman, are you aware that you are liable to severe punishment as an impostor?"

"Pardon me, Lord Bascom," interposed the spy, in the most plausible manner, "but as the young person has consented to lead me to the hiding-place of your erring daughter, I am certain you will pardon her. She is very sorry for having been led into such an error."

"As you say, sir; but will she lead us to the hiding-place?"

"I am assured that she will, sir, if you will place her in my hands."

The spy then drew Lord Bascom aside as he whispered:

"Leave the whole affair in my hands and I will certainly succeed in all the promises I made to-night. This young person is a spy of the Invisible Twelve, and I will work on her. I hold a secret——"

"You hold too many infernal secrets altogether, I fear!"

"But I never betray any, my lord, unless to serve a good purpose. This young woman will be in my power, and she will aid us materially, if you will let me have my own way with her."

"Take care that she does not lead you into a trap. There was a dangerous gleam in her eye awhile ago."

"Pshaw, my lord, I can lead her as I please, you may be sure. I will go with her now, and——"

"But how am I to deal with the minions of the Invisible Twelve outside?"

"They will disperse when they see the young woman going out with me. With her aid I will entrap the whole gang ere they can trouble you again."

"But will they not suspect you on leaving here with her?"

"They will not, as I have already led her to believe that I am one of them. Besides, I can soon change my face, you know."

"Hang me, Parson, if I don't believe you'll make a jumble of the business with all your cleverness."

"I'd like to wager a big stake on it, my lord. As it is, if I fail, it will be the last of me, and I should think that I have reason to be careful."

"Where do you propose to go with that young person now?"

"To Lady Mary's hiding-place. Oh, by the way, see that the young husband is not released at present, or till you hear from me again."

"Very well. Go ahead with the undertaking, but let me warn you again that you are engaged against men who are not fools. The affair last night warned me of their power for evil."

"Keep a strict watch on all the officers who were with you

then, my lord, and I am certain you will soon find that they are in league with the Invisible Twelve. I will leave you now."

Offering the young woman his arm, the cunning rascal withdrew from the mansion as he whispered to her:

"Give our friends the signal that all is well and come with me. I assure you that I am your true friend."

Mad Polly did not have any faith in the man, but she felt inclined to humor him at the moment, and she gave the signal, as requested.

The agents of the Invisible Twelve dispersed on seeing the signal, and only one of them followed the pair as they walked along the street.

That one person was Justin O'Neill, who followed them at some distance, as he muttered to himself:

"As I do not know the man with the young lady, I feel that it is my duty to watch over her. He may be the spy who is giving us so much trouble."

CHAPTER XIII.

MAD POLLY AND THE SPY.

There was not a braver woman in Ireland than Mad Polly, and she was as clever as she was fearless.

Having been convinced that the man who claimed to be her father had treated her in a scandalous manner, she had made up her mind to link her fortunes with the secret society governed by the Invisible Twelve, and to work against Lord Bascom to the bitter end.

She knew that the man she loved so well was in prison, and that his life was in danger.

She was well aware that her uncle had robbed her of a large sum of the money left to her by her father, and that the tyrant was plotting to grab the remainder.

As she was patriotic to the core, she also knew that her uncle was an enemy of the land of her birth, and she had learned to hate him on that score.

Polly had good reason to know that Lord Bascom would be put out of the way at almost any moment by the agents of the Invisible Twelve, if it were deemed advisable, but she also knew that his death was not desired at that time, as it was their intention to punish him in another manner.

They would crush him to the earth through her instrumentality.

The young woman had several reasons for joining the secret organization.

In the first place, she desired to rescue her husband.

She wished to punish Lord Bascom, and thus serve the cause that was dear to her heart.

And she was also anxious to discover and punish the spy who was giving information against the society.

As the young woman walked along the street, arm-in-arm with the man who appeared to know so much she asked herself:

"Is this fellow the spy who is watching us so closely, or is he really what he says he is? Well, well, I will soon find out, if I am not a fool."

Parson did not utter a word until they were some distance away from Lord Bascom's mansion, and he then turned his eyes on the young woman, saying:

"Well, young lady, where will we go now?"

"To my lodgings, of course, sir," was the ready reply, given in a merry way.

"I did think of going elsewhere, but it will be as you say. Are we going to be friends, lady Mary?"

"Certainly, sir. As you seem to know so much, it is not for me to quarrel with you. Besides, you are one of us and I must have faith in you."

"Your faith will not be misplaced, I can assure you. I have good reason to hate your uncle, as he has wronged me sorely. Besides, I am a thorough Nationalist, and he is English to the core."

The young woman cast a winning smile at the fellow as she rejoined:

"I can readily see that you are a very clever man, but I would really like to know how you discovered me?"

"That is my secret, young lady. I will not give you my full confidence until you confide in me fully."

"And if I do not?"

"I will be compelled to inform Lord Bascom that your husband is the famous Canadian spy."

"Well, now, that is a strange way for one to speak who pretends to be a true friend of Ireland. I fear that you are one of Lord Bascom's tools."

As the young woman uttered the words she withdrew her arm and turned on her companion in an indignant manner.

Parson laughed merrily, and then seized the young woman by the arm as he said:

"See here, young lady, if I were what you accuse me, what was to hinder me from denouncing you to your uncle at once, and then placing you under arrest?"

"Because you know that the step would be attended with great danger. You knew that my friends would rescue me at all hazards."

"But your friends are not at hand now. What is to hinder me from making you my prisoner now?"

They had stopped on the sidewalk when the young woman withdrew her arm, and one glance around told the man that they were alone in the deserted spot.

When he put the question to the young woman she fell back a few steps and drew a revolver, presenting it at his face, as she calmly replied:

"This will hinder you, treacherous spy! If you attempt to lay a hand on me I will blow your brains out on the instant."

The spy did not flinch an inch on seeing the deadly weapon pointed at his head, but he laughed again, as he replied, in jocular tones:

"Fire away, young lady, but you must remember that you are about to kill one of your best friends. How can I convince you that I am your sincere friend?"

The man spoke in such an earnest manner that Polly was thrown off her guard and she lowered the weapon.

The cunning rascal seized her wrist on the instant and secured the weapon, as he cried:

"I will put this out of harm's way, and I will now inform you that you are my prisoner. A few months in the madhouse will cool you a little."

As the fellow spoke he laid a strong hand on the young woman's shoulder and commenced to drag her along.

Mad Polly was paralyzed for a moment by the sudden attack, but her courage soon revived, and she struck out at the fellow in a furious manner, crying:

"Oh, you treacherous hound, I knew you were Lord Bascom's spy! You will never take me to a madhouse while I have life and strength to defend myself."

Parson chuckled to himself as he grappled with the excited creature, and he then drew her wrists together in the most scientific manner, as he said:

"Now you are powerless, you mad creature. The bracelets fit you nicely."

As the fellow uttered the last words he slipped a pair of handcuffs on the wrists of the young woman, and he then

seized her by the shoulder in a very rough manner, as he continued:

"You will now come along with me, and we will see if your friends of the Invisible Twelve can save you. If you raise a single cry I will denounce your husband. I am your friend for all that, and I would save you for your own sake."

The agitated young woman was about to cry out for help, hoping that some of her friends might be close at hand, when a man sprang out at them and dealt Parson a stunning blow on the side of the head, as he cried:

"The lady's friends are at hand, you infamous wretch. Now you will see that you cannot insult her without getting what you deserve."

The blow felled the spy to the ground, and before he could recover from its effect Justin O'Neill had secured him in the most effectual manner.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPY BRAVES IT OUT.

Although Justin O'Neill made short work of it in dealing with Parson, the spy was not altogether crushed by the stunning blow he had received.

He was more put out by the sudden disappearance of the young woman and her rescuer, who were not to be seen in any direction when he regained his feet.

Isaac Parson was a man of many resources as well as many faces, and he was not to be baffled by the mere fact that the young woman had escaped from him at that trying moment.

His first idea was to return to Lord Bascom and tell him what had occurred, but before he gained the mansion an incident happened which induced him to change his plan for the time.

The spy was in the act of passing the alleyway behind the mansion when he saw a man and a woman gliding along the dark passage leading toward the door of the gymnasium, where they stopped as if to gain admittance.

Drawing back in the shadow of a building to watch them, the cunning fellow muttered to himself:

"Hang me if it isn't Mad Polly and the fellow who rescued her. Can it be that the gymnasium is her hiding-place? If it is so there is a big point gained."

The pair did enter the gymnasium, while the spy hastened to change his appearance, as he continued to mutter to himself:

"The capture of Lord Bascom and the officers puzzles me. Can it be possible that the meeting-place of the Invisible Twelve is somewhere along this lane, and that there is a passage leading to it from the gymnasium?"

Parson remained in the doorway some time meditating on the point thus presented to him, and the more he meditated the more convinced he became that he had struck on a warm scent in his pursuit of the Invisible Twelve.

The spy then remembered that there was a small theater or lyceum up the alleyway some doors from the gymnasium, and that it had not been in use for some time, save when now and then engaged by some private theatrical company.

Stealing along the alleyway in the direction of the building mentioned, the daring spy proceeded to watch the door of the old theater as well as to keep his eye on the gymnasium, chuckling to himself as he continued to mutter:

"Now, hang me if I don't feel in my heart that I have struck on a big secret. If I am right, what is easier than to surround the place and capture them all on some night of meeting. Perhaps they are in session now this very night."

Even as Parson muttered to himself a carriage stopped at the other end of the lane and three persons alighted from it.

The spy had his eye on them very soon, and he could tell by the movement of one of the party that he was being led along, blindfolded, by the other.

To the spy's great joy, the three stopped in front of the side door of the little theater, and they all entered on the instant.

"There goes a new candidate," muttered Parson. "Hang me, if I don't get in through one of the back windows, and try to find out what they are at. Then I can summon the police and soldiers and nab them all. It is a risky game, but it will be great if I succeed. But, in the first place, I shall see what the couple are at in the gymnasium."

On looking up at that building, Parson could perceive that there was a dim light burning in the upper room facing out on the alleyway.

That light could not be perceived from the mansion in front, and the spy felt assured that those then present there were not friends of Lord Bascom.

As the confidential spy had the run of Lord Bascom's house, having occasion to pay visits there at all hours of the night, he had a key opening a gate leading into a garden on the side of the gymnasium.

With that key he soon reached the door of the gymnasium leading out into the garden, but on attempting to open it quietly he found that it was well secured from the inside.

He then stole around to the other door and, somewhat to his surprise, he found that it was partly open, as if other visitors were expected very soon.

After hesitating a little while, the daring rascal stole into the hallway and listened attentively.

Then he could hear subdued voices in the room at the head of the stairs, and he stole up as he muttered to himself:

"If it proved to be the fellow who knocked me down, I'll serve him the same way and secure the young lady."

Stealing up the stairs, the spy listened attentively at the door, and he soon recognized the voices of those within.

One of the speakers was Mad Polly and the other was Justin O'Neill.

"They should be here soon now," said Justin.

"I hope they will soon come," returned the young woman, in anxious tones. "When does the meeting commence to-night?"

The spy was listening for the answer, when he heard footsteps in the hall below, and then a voice called out:

"Is that you up there, old fellow?"

The speaker was Theodore Falvey, who was accompanied by Mort Morley.

The sly spy had just time to slip into the other room when Justin opened the door and called on his friends below to come up.

The three young men and the young woman were soon in earnest conversation, and a very interesting conversation it proved to be, to the spy at least, who was soon listening at the door again.

Parson then learned a piece of information that caused his heart to beat alternately with joy and fear.

The Invisible Twelve had ordered the arrest of Lord Bascom, who was to be brought before them for trial that very night.

The cunning rascal also learned that his real identity had been discovered at last, and that he was to be brought before the mysterious body to stand his trial as a spy and a traitor at the same time.

Whatever may have been the real name of the adroit spy, he had figured in Dublin during the past year under the title of Martin O'Connor, and he had played the part of an advanced patriot in public taverns and meeting-halls.

As the rascal had borne forged letters from Irish Nationalists in London, he was not looked upon with suspicion until

it was discovered by the Invisible Twelve that a spy had gained entrance into their ranks.

One of the keen-eyed Twelve had tracked Parson to Lord Bascom's house that night, and then an order was at once sent out for his arrest.

The spy was as brave a fellow as ever entered the camp of an enemy, but he did not relish the idea of being brought before the mysterious body who proved themselves able to penetrate into disguises which had baffled so many other clever persons.

When he had learned all that he wished to know Parson stole down the stairs again, and he was in the act of passing out into the dark hall when two figures appeared before him in the doorway, while a gruff voice demanded:

"Who comes here?"

"A friend," promptly replied the spy.

"What is your number?"

Parson then saw that he was in for it now, and he made a sudden rush at the two men at the door, dealing them blows with each hand, as he cried:

"One! two!"

He was a powerful man and a clever boxer, and he dealt his blows with great force and precision.

The two men fell on the floor, one of them yelling:

"Treachery! Help!"

Parson had just gained the door when it was shut and bolted by invisible hands, and he received a blow on the head that felled him in turn to the floor, and before he could make another movement he was seized by several strong hands, a saturated handkerchief was placed to his nostrils, and a husky voice over him said:

"I have been watching the fellow for some time back, but now we will see who he is. Drag him into the light."

The spy was not yet fully insensible when he was dragged into the light.

In the struggle in the hall the wig and false beard were torn from his head and face and then the same husky voice exclaimed:

"Hurrah, boys! I'll be hanged if it isn't the very fellow we are after to-night. It is Martin O'Connor!"

Parson struggled as well as he could, but he was overpowered without much trouble, while the chloroform was also working on him with slumbering effect.

He could not tell how long he stayed in a state of unconsciousness, but when he recovered he found himself seated on a chair in that remarkable square apartment, in which a dim light was burning.

On attempting to move, the spy found that his arms and legs were secured to the large chair by some mechanical contrivance, but he was not deprived of utterance by a gag.

He had scarcely recovered his senses when the light glared up a little, and then a trumpet voice fell on his ear, saying:

"Martin O'Connor, or whatever your real name may be, you are accused of being a traitor and a spy. Are you prepared to answer the charge against you?"

Parson felt that his only chance for escape was to deny all charges to be brought against him, and he braced himself as he bravely answered:

"I deny that I am either a traitor or a spy, and I defy any one to bring proof against me."

"What were you doing in Bascom's gymnasium to-night?"

"I was watching two people whom I saw enter there in a suspicious manner."

"Did you know those people?"

"I did not."

"Then why did you watch them?"

"Out of a spirit of curiosity, I suppose."

"Why do you travel around in disguise?"

"Because I know that British spies are on the alert in Dublin at the present time."

"Did you not visit Lord Bascom this evening, and say there to a certain young lady that you were a Mr. Darling, in the employ of the castle?"

"I did visit Lord Bascom, and I made the assertion because I desired to befriend the young lady in question and get her out of that tyrant's power."

"Did you not give Lord Bascom information regarding the society now governed by the Invisible Twelve?"

"I did not give him any information concerning the society."

"Then what was your business in visiting him?"

"As I know that he is a tyrant and a foul foe of Ireland, I wanted to punish him by compelling him to restore certain papers he had stolen."

"Did you not assist him in stealing those papers?"

"I did not."

"Then how did you become informed that the papers were stolen?"

"From the fact that certain inquiries were made for them, and that it was to Lord Bascom's interest to get them into his possession."

"Do you positively deny that you are a paid agent of the government and serving under Lord Bascom?"

"I deny it."

"What is your legitimate business?"

"I made money in California, and I am now living on that money."

"When you joined the society you said you had a personal grievance against Lord Bascom. Is that the truth?"

"It is the truth, as I then asserted. He caused the death of my only brother, and I have sworn vengeance against him. It was to carry out that purpose that I managed to become acquainted with him."

"Are you prepared to act and testify against him now?"

"To the very death."

"You will soon have an opportunity. Did you not also visit him under the name of Parson?"

"I did."

"Were you ever acquainted in New York with a young gentleman named Mortimer Morley?"

The spy paled a little when the question was asked, but he soon recovered his composure and replied:

"I do not remember knowing any person of that name."

"You are a liar, Luke Jackson!" cried an angry voice behind him.

The spy turned his head on the instant, and his face paled again as he recognized the speaker, who was seated in a chair close behind him.

The speaker was Mortimer Morley, and there was a look of vengeance in his eye, as he met the glance of the accused, and then cried, in indignant tones:

"It was this vile rascal who had my brother condemned to death as an English spy in Canada, and he has him clapped in prison here also. Luke Jackson, you boasted in New York that you could never be detected by the Fenians, but you are caught at last. I denounce you as the most treacherous and dirty spy that ever trod on this earth!"

CHAPTER XV.

LORD BASCOM BRAVES IT OUT ALSO.

Lord Bascom became very uneasy after the spy and young woman left the mansion.

The hint thrown out by Parson, to the effect that the police around him were in league with the Invisible Twelve, served to increase his agitation.

Lord Bascom had braved many dangers while working against the patriots of Ireland, and he had often been threatened with assassination, but he had never quailed before what he thought was his duty for England.

He was one of those Englishmen who believed that Ireland had no rights at all, except those extended at the point of the bayonet or sword.

He had succeeded in crushing many rebellions and plots in Dublin and elsewhere, but now he felt that he was confronted by an organization that he could not crush by any means before used, and he therefore had learned to fear it somewhat.

After pondering for some moments, the tyrant determined on sending for fresh guards of police, fearing that an attempt on his life would be made that very night.

He was also tormented by the young woman who claimed to be his niece from Galway, and who had so openly accused him of robbing the young woman whom he had passed off so long as his daughter.

On the arrival of the fresh policemen, the perplexed tyrant sent three of them out into the garden to guard against an attack that way, while the others were ordered not to admit any one who was not personally known to his lordship.

While he was still ruminating over the situation a slight commotion was heard in the garden, and then one of the policemen led a woman to the door of the library, saying:

"Lord Bascom, this young lady claims to be a relative of yours, and she insists on seeing you."

Lord Bascom started up in some surprise on seeing his visitor, for it was Mad Polly who stood before him.

The young woman wore the flesh-colored mask, and presented the scarred face so well known in the neighborhood, while her voice had the old ring, as she addressed Lord Bascom, saying:

"Pardon me, sir, for intruding on you, but it is necessary that I must have a serious conversation with you this very night."

Lord Bascom motioned to the policeman to withdraw, and he closed the door after him ere he addressed the young woman, saying:

"What brings you here, you rebellious and brazen creature?"

"I came here to demand the release of my lawful husband, and to insist on a settlement with me, sir."

The man's face flashed with anger, and he seized the young woman by the shoulder in a very rough manner, as he exclaimed:

"I'll settle with you as you deserve, you mad hussy. I'll have you in a strait-jacket, and in a madhouse cell in less than an hour."

With a quick effort the young woman flung off the grasp, and then drew back, saying:

"Then you are resolved on refusing me common justice? You know in your heart that I am not mad, and you desire to put me in a madhouse for the purpose of robbing me. I now warn you for the last time that I will have justice. Refuse me at your deadly peril."

A scornful laugh burst from the tyrant, and he sprang at the young woman again, as he cried out:

"Help, there, officers! Arrest this young woman!"

Although the tyrant yelled forth his order in loud tones, not a single officer appeared to obey him.

Two strangers did appear in the apartment at the moment, and each of them seized the tyrant from behind, drew his arms back, pressed a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, while one of them hissed in his ear:

"Tyrant, your hour of trial has come!"

Mad Polly sprang forward also, and pressed a wet sponge

to her uncle's mouth and nostrils, as she said, in low and solemn tones:

"I gave you the last chance I could procure, and now you must answer for your cruel and treacherous acts."

The amazed man was readily overpowered, and he fell senseless on the floor, without making the least disturbance.

When Lord Bascom recovered his senses again he found himself in that dimly lighted apartment which served as a sort of a prisoners' dock for the judges of the Invisible Twelve.

While he was secured to a chair in the same manner as the spy, a gag was also placed in his mouth.

A very dim light was burning in the apartment but no sooner did Lord Bascom give signs of returning consciousness than out stalked the shadowy forms of the Invisible Twelve.

One of their number held up the trumpet and addressed the prisoner, saying:

"Lord Bascom, you desired to know something about the Invisible Twelve, and your wish will now be gratified. There is not a man here present who has not suffered from your cruel and unnecessary tyranny, and we are all prepared to deal with you as you so justly deserve. But as it is our rule to give all prisoners a fair trial, we will not deny it to you. Are you prepared to defend yourself against the charges that will be brought against you?"

The gag was removed on the instant, and the prisoner replied in firm and dignified tones:

"I deny your right, lawless wretches, to try a lord of England in this manner. Yet will I, for form's sake, answer any charge that may be brought against me. I presume that I am in your power, and that you are capable of assassinating me, but I scorn to quail before you."

Another of the Invisible Twelve then raised his speaking-trumpet and thundered forth:

"As you have deprived us of just laws in Ireland, it behooves us to take the scales of justice in our own hands at times. You are accused, while acting as an officer of England, of persecuting our people in the most unjust, merciless and cruel manner. What is your answer to the charge?"

"I carried out the laws as they were made by our English law-givers," was the scornful reply.

"Did the English law ever call on you to persecute and hound to death your private enemies?"

"If those enemies happened to be Irish rebels I would never spare them."

"Did the English law call on you to rob a young lady who had been placed in your charge by her dying relative?"

"The person who makes that charge against me is a fit subject for a lunatic asylum and it cannot be proved that I ever robbed her of a shilling."

"Did the English law call on you to commit murder?" demanded the speaker, in still more loud and thrilling tones, while the trumpet trembled in his veiled hands.

On hearing the dreadful charge thus put forth, Lord Bascom trembled a little, and he then exclaimed:

"Murder, you say! It was not murder to put the enemies of England to death according to law."

"And just as the laws in Ireland are," continued the speaker with the trumpet, "they never countenanced you in committing private and wilful murder."

The prisoner's limbs trembled more, and his voice was a little hoarse as he replied:

"Who does accuse me of, private and wilful murder?"

"I do!" thundered the accuser, in louder tones than before.

"I solemnly accuse you of murdering your own brother, the father of the young lady whom you have brought up as your

daughter, and whom you have robbed of more than half the fortune left to her by the murdered man."

While the prisoner was hearing this terrible accusation, beads of perspiration streamed down his face, but making violent effort at self-control, he raised his voice in defiant tones and cried:

"It is a lie! A base lie! My brother died a natural death in Australia, and who are you that dares to accuse me of his murder?"

"I am one who witnessed the deed," rang out the trumpet voice.

As the invisible judge spoke he flung down the trumpet, tore off the gauze on his face and then advanced with measured steps, crying, in his natural tones:

"Stephen Bascom, do you dare deny the murderous charge now?"

The accused gasped for breath as he stared up at the face before him, and he then exclaimed, in thrilling tones:

"Oh, heaven! it is my murdered brother!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE INVISIBLES APPEAR.

Lord Bascom was completely prostrated by the sudden and unexpected appearance among the Invisibles of the brother he had believed to be dead for so many long years.

The guilty man bent his head on his breast for some moments and moved about in agony, while the injured brother stood over him without showing a gleam of pity in his glaring eyes.

Dead silence reigned in the square apartment, the other members of the Invisibles standing aloof from the accuser, as if willing to leave Lord Bascom's fate to the decision of his brother.

After moaning for some moments the prisoner looked up at his brother with a haggard face, as he gasped forth:

"Oh, mercy, mercy, brother! That apparent crime was an accident. I did not intend to hit you when I fired the rifle, I swear to you!"

"You know that it was not an accident," retorted the accuser, in clear, cold and merciless tones. "Did I not see you pointing the deadly weapon at me, and did I not call out to warn you?"

"I swear to you that I took you for one of the African savages."

"You did, indeed! You knew full well that there were no savages within some miles of our camp when we went out together to hunt that morning. You knew that I was not a black savage when you approached me to note the effect of your shot, with your rifle ready to fire at me again had you not felt certain that I was dead already."

"I thought that you were dead, I swear, but I was so shocked by the accident that I could not do anything but hasten back to the camp for assistance."

A scornful smile appeared on the face of the accuser as he retorted:

"Yes, you hastened back to the camp and asserted that I had been shot by the savages, but when you hastened back to the spot with assistance you found that the body had disappeared. Then you asserted that it had been taken off by the cannibals. Would you like to learn how I did escape death?"

"Oh, yes, yes, and I will make all the amends possible."

"What amends can you ever make to me for my years of captivity and torture among the savage tribes who captured me that morning when I had recovered my senses after you had shot me down in cold blood? For seventeen weary years I was a slave and a drudge among them, while you were enjoy-

ing my title and estate, as well as robbing my daughter of the fortune left to her by her mother."

"Thank heaven," groaned the prisoner, "that you have escaped! In the proper place and time I will give you a full explanation. I have been grossly deceived by my enemies, who have poisoned your mind while you were laboring under the mistake that I meant to kill you."

"Liar, tyrant and assassin! I have not been misinformed. You attempted to murder me, in order to gain my title and my estate. Can you now refund all the funds of mine you have squandered at gambling and other vices?"

"I will do my best."

"Your best, indeed! Did I not always warn you, when parading as an English bigot, that you were a born Irishman, and that you should be true to the land of your birth?"

"Our political principles were never the same, I admit."

"No, for you were a merciless tyrant at heart, and a renegade to your country. Show me the man who is false to the land of his birth, whatever that land may be, and I will show you one who is capable of committing all the crimes possible. But I am wasting time in preaching to such an inflexible wretch. Look at the gentlemen now before you."

As the accuser spoke the words each of the other Invisibles tore away the gauze masks and presented their faces to the prisoner.

The prisoner stared from one to the other of the faces thus presented to him, and a deadly chill pervaded his whole frame as he recognized all the Invisibles in turn.

The first man he recognized was young Justin O'Neill, whose father had been hounded to death by him.

As he continued to gaze from face to face the wretched being recognized in each person one whom he had deeply injured in some form while carrying out his merciless policy as an agent of the British government.

"Gaze at these men," continued his chief accuser, "and answer me if they are common assassins, banded together for the mere purpose of stabbing their political enemies in the dark. You know in your heart that there is not one among them who would commit a mean action."

"Then why are you banded together, if not for the purpose of stabbing your political enemies?" asked the prisoner, as he felt that all those present were opposed to the English rule in Ireland.

"We are banded together for the cause of Ireland, and for the wild justice of revenge as well, but we are not assassins, for all that."

Gaining a little courage, the prisoner then asked, with a grim smile:

"What was I brought here for, if you do not mean to kill me?"

"That I will soon explain. Were you not warned that you would incur our wrath if you did not cease persecuting those whose only crime was their devotion to the land of their birth?"

"I received so many such threats in my time that I paid little heed to them. You cannot say that I am a coward."

"You are worse than a coward, as you assailed the helpless with the strong powers at your command. You did not spare women or children in pursuing your cruel work of destroying the Irish people who would not bow to your will. But we will to the point. Did you not refuse, even twice to-night, to do some simple acts of justice?"

"You allude to my treatment of Lady Mary, I presume? I wished to curb her, as she is tainted in the brain."

"Fool, fool, that argument will not serve you. Why did you wish to give my daughter in marriage to one she hated?"

The prisoner did not answer, and the accuser continued:

"I will answer for you. The man I allude to suspected you of having murdered me, and he accused you of it. In order to silence him you offered him the hand of my daughter in marriage, as well as her fortune. The brave girl drove the nuptial from her in disgust by intending to him and to you all that she was a fright, while in reality she is a beautiful young woman."

The accuser made a sign and one side of the apartment was lowered, presenting the small stage well lighted.

On that stage and facing them stood Lady Mary with her disfigured mask on.

"Is that the young woman you believed to be your niece?" asked the accuser.

"Yes."

At a sign from her father the young woman withdrew the mask and bowed to the audience with infinite grace, as she remarked, in merry tones:

"To be sure I am his niece, Miss Matilda Bodkin, from Galway."

Notwithstanding for the moment the position he was in, the prisoner stared at the fair apparition with deep emotion, as he exclaimed, in excited tones:

"This is wonderful indeed! And so you were wearing a mask all those years, you cunning creature?"

Lady Mary bowed and smiled again ere she answered:

"In more ways than one, my beloved uncle. I was watching you while you were robbing me, pretending all the time that I was thoroughly ignorant in business matters. I knew that you were giving a certain Mr. Morris large sums of money out of my fortune, but I did not know until to-night that it was hush-money to keep a deadly secret, after I had thoroughly disgusted the gallant by my face and conduct. I now know that Mr. Morris, Mr. Parson, and even Mr. Darling are all one and the same person."

The young woman then advanced forward a step or two and said, in earnest tones:

"Father and gentlemen all, I beg of you to be merciful. My uncle deserves death, I know, yet I crave mercy for him, as he was very kind to me save in the matter of taking my money and imprisoning my husband."

"Daughter," cried Lord Bascorn, "we will show him all the mercy he deserves. Retire with your husband now."

"Her husband!" exclaimed the prisoner, as he stared at the young man who advanced at this moment to lead the young woman off the stage. "Why, he was in prison this evening, I am certain."

"But he has been released," answered his brother, "and without your order. Oh, wretch, you little know the power held by the Invisible Twelve. Have you any more to say ere sentence is passed on you?"

"Yes, yes, wait a few moments. That Parson—where is he now?"

"Turn and you will see."

The prisoner turned his head and saw Parson on a chair behind him.

"You are lost, damned!" said the real Lord Bascorn, "but you have not yet heard what your fate is to be."

"Before we do," said the condemned brother, "I beg of you that you will answer me a few questions. If we are to die, it will not injure you for us to know some of your secrets."

"Go on, then."

"Where is this place of meeting?"

"In the old theater in the lane, near the gymnasium."

"Does it connect by a secret way with the gymnasium?"

"It does, and with the mansion you occupy, as well."

"Do the police who guard my house belong to your society?"

"They do. Some of the best men on the force are members, and it was so arranged that our friends were placed on guard in the mansion to-night."

"You amaze me, I must say."

"We have amazed others as well, yet our contrivances are simple enough when they are understood."

"On the night I was initiated I saw scenes on the stage that were true to life. How do you work it?"

"We have hired this place as a private theatrical company, and we have several clever actors among us. When it is necessary to impress new candidates with our power, or to test their sincerity in joining us, we present scenes they are familiar with, as we know in time."

"By Jove, but you are clever fellows, and no mistake!" cried Parson, in the coolest manner possible. "I have a proposition to make to you."

"What is it?"

"Let up on me and I will become one of your band. I tell you, I am a clever hand, and I will be as true as steel. I will let you into a good many secrets of the government."

A roar of derisive laughter greeted the proposal, and then the real Lord Bascom replied:

"We are not such madmen as to put our lives in the hands of such a fellow as you are. Besides, we do not admit swindlers and murderers into our ranks. You are both doomed. Brother Invisibles, how are we to dispose of the wretches?"

"We leave that to your judgment, worthy leader of the night," responded one of the judges.

"Mercy, mercy, brother!" gasped the cruel hypocrite. "I assure you that I am not prepared to die!"

"Then we will give you time to prepare for death. Now listen to your doom!"

Then Lord Bascom commenced, in cold, clear tones:

"Before pronouncing your sentences, I wish to explain the object and origin of the society in a few words.

"I originated the order and it is so formed that it is scarcely possible for a traitor to betray us, as Mr. Parson will testify, I think."

The spy nodded in approval, and the speaker continued:

"The object of this society is to encourage Irish freedom, to punish traitors and spies, and to crush all tyrants who persecute personal enemies in the name of the law.

"But, while we are sworn to vengeance, we do not use the pistol or the dagger of the assassin, and never have recourse to useless bloodshed. All those incurring our displeasure are brought here for a fair trial, and then punished as they deserve.

"As our precautions are so well taken, we are able to defy the authorities, and if we should be discovered we have every means of escape.

"So much for our organization—and now for your punishment.

"During my forced residence in Africa I became acquainted with the powers of a drug, made from herbs, to be found in that country. This drug is very powerful in its effects, but it is not deadly unless a large dose is given. A small dose will have the effect of making a perfect idiot of the most strong-minded man, and he will never recover his senses again."

The speaker's voice became very impressive, and he raised his right hand and pointed at the prisoners as he continued:

"You know full well that you each deserve death, and a sudden death at that, but I will be merciful to you. You will have twenty-four hours to prepare for the dread hereafter, and then you will each partake of a dose of the drug brought from Africa. After that, and until death ensues, you will be helpless idiots. Such is the sentence of the Invisible Twelve on those who would destroy and betray a just cause."

A deep groan burst from the speaker's brother, while a murmur of approval was heard from the other members of the band present.

The lights were then lowered, the members put on their gauzy head-coverings and retired in silent order, and the gagged prisoners were left alone to their gloomy thoughts.

* * * * *

Two days after the solemn trial took place a man was found wandering through the streets of Dublin who acted in the most idiotic manner, and who was soon arrested.

That unfortunate was Parson, the spy, who is doomed to end his days in a madhouse.

On the same day it was announced that the real Lord Bascom had returned from Africa, where he had been a prisoner among the savages for many years, and that the exile had claimed the title and estates so long usurped by his cruel brother.

Then it became known that the younger brother had received such a shock by the unexpected return of the lost one that he was bereft of his reason forever, having become a hopeless maniac.

The former tyrant was removed to a private lunatic asylum at the expense of the brother whom he had sought to murder.

Three days after it was announced that the famous Mad Polly Bascom had eloped with an American, and that she had left the country with her husband.

In the course of two weeks after the elopement a handsome young couple appeared at the Bascom mansion as guests of its owner, and it was said that the charming young lady was the lord's niece, who had been residing in France and that she would be his heiress on his death.

To the great surprise of the English party in London, Lord Bascom soon declared that he was an Irish Nationalist, and an advocate of Home Rule, and that he intended to devote his life and his fortune to the cause of freedom.

Justin O'Neill became Lord Bascom's private secretary, and the young man intends to become a member of the Irish Parliament about to be established in Dublin.

Young Falvey continues his studies, and he hopes to graduate with honors ere long.

Mortimer Morley still resides in Dublin, where he has gained a leading position on a morning journal.

In view of the prospect of an early triumph of the Home Rule champions, the Invisible Twelve do not meet at present, but they are prepared to organize for effective work again should the English bigots refuse that freedom to their country which is enjoyed in Canada and in other colonies.

Mad Polly and her young husband reside with Lord Bascom still, and the wayward creature sometimes amuses herself by putting on her ugly mask and riding through the streets of Dublin.

Next week's issue will contain "THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE SUSQUEHANNA: OR, THE YOUNG HEROES OF THE WYOMING VALLEY." By An Old Scout.

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

SPECIAL NOTICE.—All back numbers of this weekly except the following are in print: 1 to 25, 27, 29 to 36, 38 to 40, 42, 43, 45 to 51, 53 to 55, 57 to 60, 62, 64 to 69, 71 to 73, 75, 79, 81, 84 to 86, 88, 89, 91 to 94, 98 to 100, 102, 105, 107, 109 to 111, 116, 119, 122, 124 to 126, 132, 139, 140, 143, 163, 166, 171, 179 to 181, 186, 192, 212, 213, 215, 216, 233, 239, 247, 257, 265, 268, 272, 277, 294. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 163 WEST 23D STREET, New York City, and you will receive the copies you order by return mail.

THE BLACK POOL.

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

A fearful rumor had gained circulation in Wakefield. One of its most prominent citizens had mysteriously disappeared.

John Crockett was the president of the First National Bank, the trustee of several valuable estates, and a man in whom every one had placed unlimited confidence.

His indorsement upon a note, or his word of honor in any transaction was equivalent to certain fulfillment. Yet in an evil hour he had fallen victim to the tempter.

Or at least so it was believed. Certain it was that he had vanished from Wakefield, and with him had also disappeared sixty thousand dollars of the bank's money in greenbacks.

This had caused no end of a scandal, and the family, consisting of Mrs. Crockett, Jack, the son, and Emma and Louise, the daughters, were in an anguished state therefore.

Crockett had been a man of liberal ways and had lived up to his income fully. So it happened that in order to establish the family honor and pay the absconding man's defalcation Mrs. Crockett was obliged to sell the beautiful mansion and its furnishings at a sacrifice.

The oldest daughter, Emma, had been quite prominent in social circles, but was not compelled to retire. It was a fearful fall for such a proud family.

Mr. Crockett had been missing three months. Jack, the son, had affirmed his father's innocence from the first and declared a belief in foul play.

Jack resolved to play the part of a detective. He had read many accounts of the sharp work and the system of celebrated ferrets of the law.

His first move was to carefully trace the movements of his father upon the day of his disappearance.

Mr. Crockett had left his house at half-past nine in the morning. It was easy to trace him to the bank, where he remained until lunch time.

Then Jack found a gentleman, a broker on the street, who had accompanied him out to lunch. This gentleman affirmed that Mr. Crockett had seemed in the best of spirits.

That afternoon the banker had been in his private office.

It was discovered that he had a caterer bring in a lunch, and he had eaten it in the bank. The clerks all left at about that time, and this was the last seen of the banker.

If there was a person in the world whom Jack believed knew the inside facts of his father's disappearance, this was the confidential clerk, Nat Barker.

Barker was a fellow of peculiar ways. Young and handsome, he was prominent in the youthful society of Wakefield, and considered a good catch by most of the eligible young ladies of the town.

Yet a deep student of human nature could not have overlooked the fact that the clerk's character was superficial.

There was a reckless gleam in his keen black eyes, and a cruel expression about the mouth which stamped the owner as a skeptic and hardened in nature.

As yet Barker had not shown his hand in Wakefield; but keen, observant Jack Crockett had long since fathomed him.

One reason for Jack's aversion was the fact that Barker professed to be deeply enamored of his sister Louise. Jack would have seen any fate overtake her than to wed Nat Barker.

But Louise herself had no liking for the fellow, and had refused his suit in firm and decided manner.

Barker, however, had made up his mind to possess her, and he was not the sort of fellow to be hindered by any light obstacle.

Thus matters stood. Now that Mr. Crockett had gone down in the world so suddenly, Barker seemed to bloom forth all at once with finality and confidence. He at once came down to the humble home of the family, and professed the deepest of friendship.

"If there is anything I can do to help you bear your burden," he declared warmly, "I shall be only too glad to do so."

But somehow more could seem to meet him a larger cordially. There seemed a lack of sincerity and an air of design that forbade this.

Louise, however, could read the young villain's nature well. She was not to be deceived. Once again she refused him.

Jack Crockett had adhered firmly to his soldierly conceived belief that Barker, the confidential clerk, knew something of the dark mystery. He took occasion to gradually question him.

But in every instance the villain feigned ignorance. That only increased Jack's suspicions.

"All right!" he mentally resolved. "They can all pursue whatever scent they please, but my detective work is going to hold Mr. Barker as the central figure."

And with this resolve Jack began to shadow the clerk.

It was not long before important matters began to come to light.

The fellow associated with the fast blood of the town. He purchased a fast horse, gambled, and drank high wines.

Jack carefully shadowed him. One day he followed him, with the result of a most important revelation.

Barker had been carousing with some friends, and in alighting from a carriage dropped a package from his pocket.

Jack, who had been shadowing him, strolled carelessly along and picked it up. It was a roll of paper, like a small map, and Jack's curiosity was aroused.

Accordingly he sought an undisturbed spot and then unrolled the map. As he glanced over it all seemed familiar to him.

"The chestnut forest on the Black Pool turnpike!" he muttered. "This is a carefully drawn plan of it. What is he doing with it?"

But, as he studied it, he noticed a peculiar mark made in very nearly the center of the chestnut woods. It was a dollar mark, or \$. The banker's son experienced a peculiar thrill, or something like a comprehension of a possible truth burst upon him.

He gave a little gasp of amazement, when suddenly a voice right at his shoulder gave him an electric shock.

"Well, my boy, that is quite a map for a rude sketch, eh?"

Assounded, Jack whirled, and was face to face with a short, square-built, but keen-eyed man with a mustache and goatee.

"Don't get excited, my boy," said the fellow, coolly. "I acted upon the license accorded my profession in looking over your shoulder. I am a detective, and on the same scent that you are. Henri Ferrit, at your service. I have been trailing the confidential clerk, Barker, for several days. I was right behind you when you picked that map up, and would have picked it up if you had not."

"Well, this is a surprise to me. But if you are on the same lay that I am, we will be foolish to quarrel. We had better co-operate."

The result was that in a brief spell the two fraternized, and were discussing the map in an interested manner.

Ferrit's opinion was expressed quickly.

"It is my belief," he declared, "that this villain of a clerk has made this map of the place where the money is hidden."

"The money!" exclaimed Jack. "Then you think that Barker is the thief?"

"I think that he is an interested party," said Ferrit, evasively.

Jack turned squarely about and faced him.

"Come," he said, bluntly. "You are one of those who believe my father guilty. Now, I tell you that he is the victim of foul play. I know that he is innocent, and I fear that he was murdered."

"Murdered!" gasped the detective. Then he recovered himself and said:

"We will not argue, my boy. Let us act."

Plans were quickly laid. The result was that the next day Jack and the detective drove out of Wakefield in a covered carriage. They carried under the seat pick and spade.

Arrived in the forest, hours were spent in the search. The spot indicated on the map by the dollar mark was found, but there was no mark there to be found indicating that anything had been buried.

Ferrit, however, kept at work, while Jack wandered down to the basin of water in the ravine below to get a drink.

It was a wide and deep pool among the trees. Tradition had it that at one time an Indian maiden, forsaken by her white lover, had drowned herself in the pool. It had rejoiced in the name of Black Pool from early settlement times.

The water, however, was clear and refreshing. Jack knelt down upon the brink to quaff the waters, when he received a terrible shock.

Deep down upon the pebbly bottom he saw what looked like a human hand. An awful horror seized him. Was his father's dead body lying there in that pool?

He did not even shout for Ferrit. A great coolness came to his aid. He tried every position to get a better view of the bottom of the pool.

But he was not successful. Suddenly he remembered that it is easier to see the bottom of a clear body of water from an elevation. A tree hung over the pool.

In an instant Jack was scaling it. Soon he was far out on an outspreading limb. He could look down and see the bottom of the pool as plain as a mirror.

And he fairly gasped for breath, so faint was he, for he saw the corpse of a man face downward. By his side was a tin box with a handle.

His faintness for a moment caused him to lose command

of his muscles, and he suddenly lost his grip upon the limb. Down he went upon his back straight into the pool.

Only the reviving effect of the chill waters gave Jack the strength to get out upon the bank. In a moment Ferrit was by his side.

The detective promptly waded in and pulled the corpse out of the pool. Out upon the brink he dragged the drowned man.

But even as he turned the dead man's face up to the light a wild cry of thanksgiving went up from Jack's lips. It was not his father.

"This fellow," exclaimed Ferrit, instantly, "upon my word, I know him well. He is the crack burglar and safe breaker, Jerry Ballard. But look! he did not come to his death by drowning."

There was a bullet hole in the dead cracksman's forehead. The two searchers looked at each other aghast. Then they examined the tin box. It was empty.

Back to their team they went. Out of the woods they drove, and were soon upon the turnpike. Suddenly Ferrit pulled up the horse.

Out of a clump of bushes by the roadside reeled a man. He was bedraggled, blood-stained and pallid. A wild cry escaped Jack Crockett's lips. Out of the carriage he went.

"Father!" he shrieked. "Thank Heaven, you're alive!"

John Crockett, the missing bank president, was clasped in his son's embrace. Incoherently, and with effort, the half-dead man told his story.

That night in the bank he had been engaged with Barker in looking up some old records of the concern. Until midnight they had worked.

Then Barker pulled out a flask and offered Mr. Crockett a taste of wine. The banker accepted, but almost as the liquor passed his lips he smelt the drug.

But he imbibed enough to make him instantly weak and dizzy. In a moment the treacherous clerk sprang upon him. At the same moment the cracksman, Jerry Ballard, rushed in.

It was a cut-and-dried scheme, and Mr. Crockett was battered down to the floor, and lay in a semi-conscious state until the bank was robbed. Then his assailants dragged him out of the bank and into a carriage. Out to the Black River bridge the robbers drove, and he was thrown over the rail into the middle of the river.

But instead of sinking and drowning, Mr. Crockett suddenly revived in the water. He was a strong swimmer, and drifted down stream for a time upon a log. Then a light on the bank was seen, he shouted, and a man came out in a boat. He was a French wool-chopper, who had a cabin on the shore. At the Frenchman's cabin Mr. Crockett lay for weeks between life and death.

Back to town went the three. In less than an hour Barker was behind prison bars.

He made a full confession. The map had been made with the intention of burying some of the stolen securities in the woods.

But while in the woods Barker and Ballard had quarreled. Barker instantly shot him and threw his body into the pool.

The villain gave up most of the money, and Mr. Crockett was enabled to get the bank upon its feet again.

ITCH POWDER.



Gee whiz! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch. It

will make him scratch, roar, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

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X-RAY WONDER



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be disclosed here, but it will afford no end of fun for any person who has one. Price, 15 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

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Here is a fine mechanical toy. It is an imitation gold-fish, about 4½ inches long, and contains a water-tight compartment which will not allow it to sink. To keep it

in a natural position, the lower fin is ballasted with lead. To make it work, a spring is wound up. You then throw it in the water, and the machinery inside causes the tail to wiggle, and propel it in the most lifelike manner. When it runs down the fish floats until it is recovered, and it can then be rewound. Races between two of these fishes are very interesting. Price, 25 cents each by mail, postpaid.

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This is the funniest trick ever exhibited and always produces roars of laughter. The performer says to the audience that he requires some eggs for one of his experiments. As no spectator carries any, he calls his assistant, taps him on top of the head, he gags, and an egg comes out of his mouth. This is repeated until six eggs are produced. It is an easy trick to perform, once you know how, and always makes a hit. Directions given for working it. Price, 25 cents by mail, postpaid.

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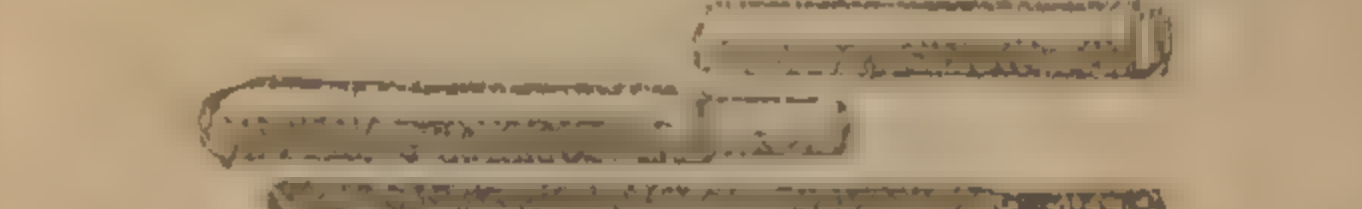
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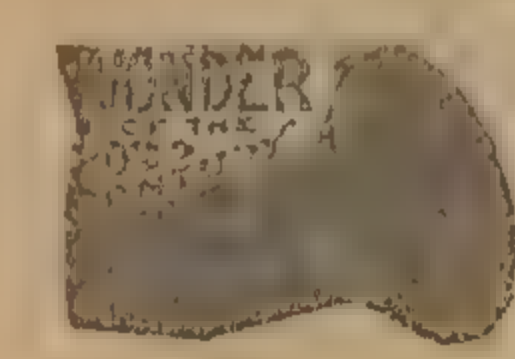
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tion of fireworks. Sparks fly in every direction, and as the cone burns down it throws out and is surrounded with what appears to be grass; at the same time a large snake uncoils himself from the burning cone and lazily stretches out in the grass, which at last burns to ashes but the snake remains as a curiosity unharmed. They are not at all dangerous and can be set off in the parlor if placed on some metal surface that will not burn. An ordinary dust pan answers the purpose nicely. Price of the six cones, packed in sawdust, in a strong wooden box, only 10c., 8 boxes for 25c., 1 dozen boxes 75c., sent by mail postpaid.

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Lots of fun can be had with it, puzzling people, while being used in a practical way to carry bank bills, letters, invoices, etc. Open with the straight hands on the left, lay a bill on top of bands, close wallet; open to the left, and the bill will be found under the crossed bands. Close wallet, open to the right, and the bill will be found under straight bands. How did it get there? That's the question. Price, 12 cents each, postpaid.

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HINDOO FLOWER-POT TRICK



With this trick you can make a plant grow right up in a flower-pot, before the eyes of your audience. An ordinary empty earthen flower-pot is handed to the spectators for examination. A handkerchief is then placed over it, and you repeat a few magic words, and wave your wand over it. When the handkerchief is removed, there is a beautiful plant, apparently in full bloom, in the pot. Full directions with each outfit. Price, 15 cents by mail, postpaid.

M. O'NEILL, 423 W. 56th St., N. Y.

FIFTH.



Also known as a Japanese butterfly. A pleasing novelty enclosed in an envelope. When the envelope is opened Fifth will fly out through the air for several yards. Made of colored paper to represent a butterfly. Price, 10c.

fly six inches wide.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

VANISHING CIGAR.



This cigar is made in exact imitation of a good one. It is held by a rubber cord which, with the attached safety pin, is fastened on the inside of the sleeve. When offered to a friend, as it is about to be taken, it will instantly disappear.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

JAPANESE TWIRLER.



A wonderful imported paper novelty. By a simple manipulation of the wooden handles a number of beautiful figures can be produced. It takes on several combinations of magnificent colors. Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SPRING TOPS



Something new for the boys. A top you can spin without a string. This is a decided novelty. It is of large size, made of brass, and has a heavy balance rim. The shank contains a powerful spring and has an outer casing. The top of the shank has a milled edge for winding it up. When wound, you merely lift the outer casing, and the top spins at such a rapid speed that the balance rim keeps it going a long time. Without doubt the handsomest and best top on the market.

Price 12 cents each, by mail, post-paid. H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

LITTLE ACCORDEONS



The smallest, cheapest, and best sounding musical instrument for the price. This perfect little accordion has four keys and eight notes, a complete scale, upon which you can play almost any tune. It is about 5 x 2 1/2 inches in size, and is not a toy, but a practical and serviceable accordion in every respect; with ordinary care it will last for years, and produces sweet music and perfect harmony. Anyone can learn to play it with very little practice.

Price 12 cents each, by mail, post-paid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE NEW FROG JOKER.



Bushels of fun! "Froggy" has got a very croaking and rasping voice, and when held in the hollow of the hand and made to croak, one instinctively looks around for a bullfrog. An amusing joke can be played on your friends by passing the ratchet-wheel of the frog down their coat-sleeve or the back of their coat. The ripping, tearing noise gives them a severe shock, and they heave a sigh of relief when they find that their clothes are sound and whole as before. A good joke is to make a gentleman's or lady's watch a stem winder. With the frog concealed in your hand, you take the stem of the watch between your thumb and finger, and at the same time allow the ball of your thumb to pass over the ratchet-wheel of the frog, when to the company you will seem to be winding the watch, but the noise will startle them, for 'twill sound more like winding Barnum's steam callopes than a watch, and you can keep winding indefinitely. The possessor of one of these Frog Jokers can have any amount of fun with it. It is made of bronze metal and will never wear out. Do not fail to send for one. Price, 10c., 3 for 25c., by mail, post-paid; one dozen by express, 75c.

H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

Ayvad's Water-Wings



Learn to swim by one trial

Price 25 cents, Postpaid

These water-wings take up no more room than a pocket-handkerchief. They weigh 3 ounces and support from 50 to 250 pounds. With a pair anyone can learn to swim or float. For use, you have only to wet them, blow them up, and press together the two ring marks under the mouthpiece.

H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

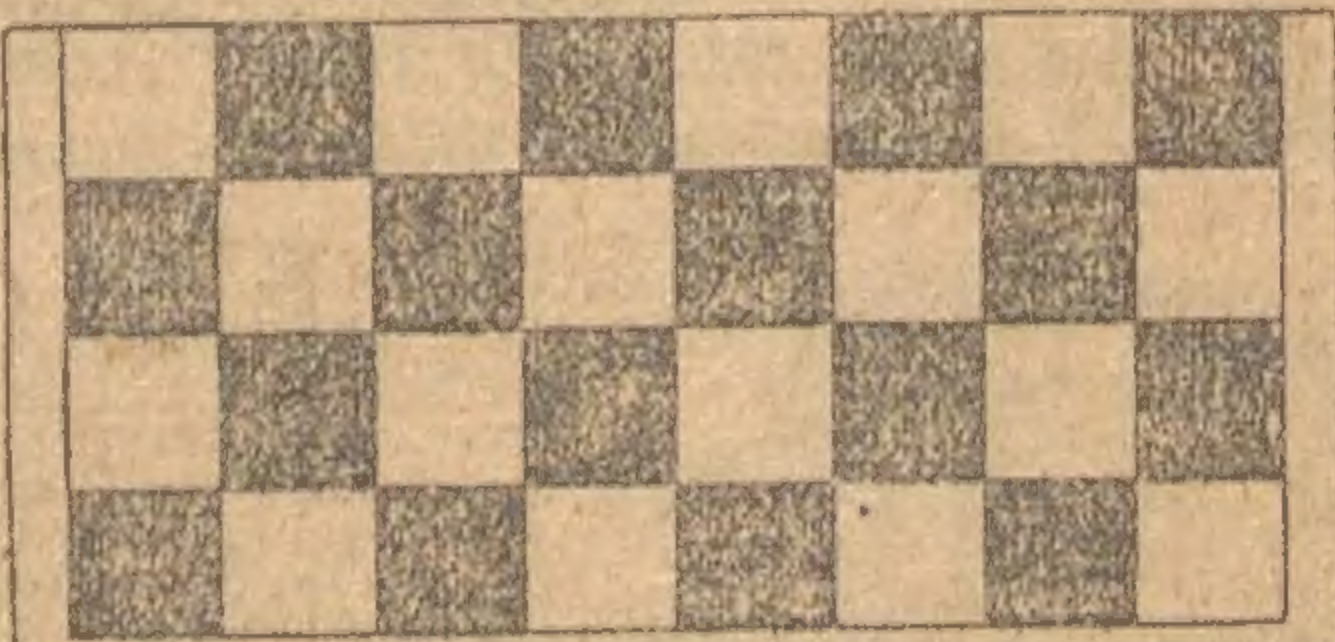


HUMANATONE.

The improved Humanatone. This flute will be found to be the most enjoyable article ever offered; nickel plated, finely polished; each put up in a box with full instruction how to use them. Price, 13c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St. N. Y.

LITTLE CHECKER BOARDS.



Price 7 cents each by mail. They are made of durable colored cardboard, fold to the size of 6 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches, and are so handy in size that they can be carried in the pocket. They contain 24 red and black checkers, and are just as serviceable as the most expensive boards made. The box and lid can be fastened together in a moment by means of patent joints in the ends. Full directions printed on each box.

H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

DOUBLE CLAPPERS



They are handsomely made of white wood, 6 inches long, with carefully rounded edges. On each side a steel spring is secured, with flat leaden discs at the ends. They produce a tremendous clatter, and yet they can be played even better than the most expensive bones used by minstrels. The finest article of its kind on the market. Price 7 cents a pair, postpaid.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

CARTER AEROPLANE No. 1.



Will fly on a horizontal line 150 feet! Can be flown in the house, and will not injure itself nor anything in the room. The most perfect little aeroplane made. The motive power is furnished by twisted rubber bands contained within the tubular body of the machine. It is actuated by a propeller at each end revolving in opposite directions. Variation in height may be obtained by moving the planes and the balance weight. It can be made to fly either to the right or the left by moving the balance side-wise before it is released for flight. Price, 35c. each, delivered.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

LIGHTNING TRICK BOX.



A startling and pleasing illusion! "The ways of the world are devious," says Matthew Arnold, but the ways of the Lightning Trick Box when properly handled are admitted to be puzzling and uncertain. You take off the lid and show your friends that it is full of nice candy. Replace the lid, when you can solemnly assure your friends that you can instantly empty the box in their presence without opening it; and taking off the lid again, sure enough the candy has disappeared. Or you can change the candy into a piece of money by following the directions sent with each box. This is the neatest and best cheap trick ever invented.

Price, only 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed, postpaid.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

LITTLE RIP'S TEN-PINS.



In each set there are ten pins and two bowling balls, packed in a beautifully ornamented box. With one of these miniature sets you can play ten-pins on your dining-room table just as well as the game can be played in a regular alley. Every game known to professional bowlers can be worked with these pins. Price, 10c. per box by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

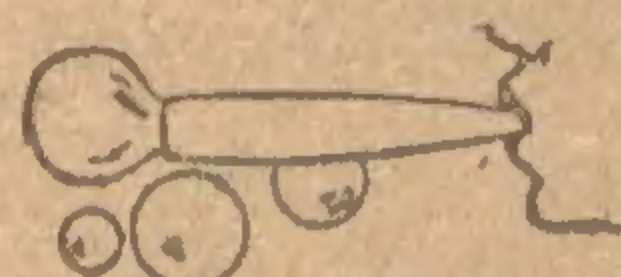
FIGHTERS.



A brand new idea for amusement. They consist of small cardboard figures of soldiers, Indians, swordsmen, etc., and are mounted on wires. The moment you twist the wires between the little figures, they instantly become animated, and charge at each other in the most astonishing manner. No end of fun with these toys. Price, 10c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

BUBBLE BLOWER.



With this device, a continuous series of bubbles can be blown. It is a wooden, cigar-shaped blower, enclosing a small vial, in which there is a piece of soap. The vial is filled with water, and a peculiarly perforated cork is inserted. When you blow in to the mouthpiece, it sets up a hydraulic pressure through the cork perforations and causes bubble after bubble to come out. No need of dipping into water once the little bottle is filled. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

J. KENNEDY, 303 W. 127th St., N. Y.

HALF MASKS.



False-faces beaten a mile! There are 7 in a set and represent an Indian, a Japanese girl, a clown, Foxy Grandpa, an English Johnny Atkins and an Automobillist. Beautifully lithographed in handsome colors on a durable quality of cardboard. They have eyeholes and string perforations. Price, 6c. each, or the full set of 7 for 25c., postpaid.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

MYSTIC PUZZLE



The newest and most novel puzzle on the market. It consists of a flat piece of wood 1 1/2 x 3 inches, neatly covered with imitation leather. The cross-bar and ring in the hole are nickel-plated. The object is to get the small ring off the bar. It absolutely cannot be done by anyone not in the secret. More fun to be had with it than with any other puzzle made. It is not breakable and can be carried in the vest pocket.

Price 10 cents each by mail, post-paid. H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

TABLE RAISING TRICK



The most mystifying trick ever done by a magician. The performer shows a plain light table. He places his hand flat upon its top. The table clings to his hand as if glued there. He may swing it in the air, but the table will not leave his hand until he sets it on the floor again. The table can be inspected to show that there are no strings or wires attached.

Price 12 cents each, by mail, post-paid. M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

MUSICAL SEAT



The best joke out. You can have more fun than a circus, with one of these novelties. All you have to do is to place one on a chair seat (hidden under a cushion, if possible). Then tell your friend to sit down. An unearthly shriek from the little round drum will send your victim up in the air, the most puzzled and astonished mortal on earth. Don't miss getting one of these genuine laugh producers. Perfectly harmless, and never misses doing its work.

Price 20 cents each, by mail, post-paid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

New York City likes peanuts. Its people consume \$4,500 worth of them every day.

The most expensive publication, with the least income, in New York City, is the City Record, which costs \$1,175,000 a year.

Germany annually imports from Chile about half a million tons of saltpetre, valued at \$23,000,000, for fertilizing purposes.

Natives of a number of South Pacific islands make fish hooks of mother-of-pearl so bright that no bait or other lure is necessary.

Cigar boxes of glass are coming more and more into use. They are cheaper than the wooden boxes and keep the cigars fresh a longer time.

Juvenile crime in France has increased by 20 per cent. in the last five years. The number of criminal offenses in the republic rose from 252,621 in 1899 to 600,000 in 1910.

Dr. Charles A. Raymond, the new president of Union University, has started a movement to erect at Union a suitable memorial to John Howard Payne, author of "Home, Sweet Home."

Statistics furnished by the Mint show that the world's production of gold in 1908 exceeded that of 1907 in value by \$31,376. The total yield was 21,378,480 fine ounces, which were worth \$441,932,200.

There was a trial by court martial of forty-three medical students of the University of Havana in November, 1871, for the alleged crime of scratching the glass plate of a vault containing the remains of a volunteer. Eight of the offenders were condemned to death on November 26 and shot the following day, while thirty-one others were sentenced to imprisonment and four were acquitted. An outbreak of indignation ensued because of the severity of the penalties inflicted.

As the result of experiments which have been made at Madagascar for a recent period by the French Government department, it is found that ostrich farming can be very well carried on in this island, and this is likely to become a paying industry in the future. Ostrich feathers from this region will stand a favorable comparison upon the European markets with those coming from the Cape, and are even said to be superior in quality. An ostrich farm has been in operation for some time at Marovoay, and another establishment will soon be started near Tulcar. This latter farm is laid out according to the best methods for raising the young birds and keeping the adult specimens. These two farms will serve as centers of observation and instruction so as to aid in private enterprises which it is hoped to promote by these examples. The government intends to supply the young ostriches for farming by means of annual sales so that specimens can be readily procured by would-be raisers.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

"I can throw a baseball four blocks." "Well, I'm a professional myself." "What, at baseball?" "No, lying."

"Goldstein uses his bat in a very business like manner." "Yes; he always waits for three balls before he tries to soak it."

Lady (to returned missionary)—And how was the king of the savages clothed? Missionary—H'm—principally with authority, madam, and not much of that.

Visitor—You think your paper is far superior to that of your rival? Country Editor—We are ahead of them. Our boiler plate last week was "Peary Ought to Discover the Pole This Year," and the best they could do was "Dewey's Home-Coming to Be a Big Success."

As the Sunday school teacher entered her classroom she saw leaving in great haste a little girl and her still smaller brother. "Why, Mary, you aren't going away?" she exclaimed in surprise. "Pleathe, Mith Anna, we've got to go," was the distressed reply. "Jimmy'th thwallowed hith collection."

Dugald was ill and his friend Donald took a bottle of whiskey to him. Donald gave the invalid one glass and said: "Ye'll get anither one in the mornin'." About five minutes elapsed, and then Dugald suddenly exclaimed: "Ye'd better let me hae the ither noo, Donal'; ye hear o' sae mony sudden deaths nooadays."

One of Pittsburg's leading manufacturers does not think so highly of the value of a college career. He was taking a fellow magnate to task the other day. "Well, I hear your son is through college." "Yes, he's through." "Put in four years, I s'pose?" "Four years." "And did he learn anything whatever that was useful during those four years?" "Oh, yes. He learned to operate an automobile so well that we have put him in charge of one of our big electric trucks."

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